

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

March 16, 1999



**Never
the
same
again!**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 16, 1999
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

He lives!

"And he said to them, 'Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him'" (Mark 16:6).

What excitement Easter brings! All our hope is centered on Jesus' resurrection from the dead. When the proof of Jesus' resurrection sinks in, the Christian is overjoyed because he knows that if Jesus lives, he too, shall live.

I can remember March 11, 1988 as if it were yesterday. We had been told that our son Caleb would not live. Yet at the moment of his birth we heard just the thing we had been told we would never hear. We heard a cry.

Caleb cried! Jane and I were overjoyed. They had said it would be impossible for our baby to utter a sound, yet God in His mercy allowed him to produce a very healthy cry. That cry gave us hope. It gave Jane and me the encouragement we needed to keep on hoping and praying during the many long months of hospitalization that followed for him.

The Word of God gives us hope that we can live in heaven with God. Think of it — we who believe can live forever because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross and when He rose again. "Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But, if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised" (I Corinthians 15:12-13).

Think of the disciples' excitement and bewilderment when they heard that Jesus was alive again! They hadn't themselves seen Him yet, but the reports began to come in from every side. How would you have felt in their situation? Would you have believed your friends' stories?

So often you and I have to see and touch before we will believe.

Jane and I could not believe Caleb's first cry. I know that I shed tears of joy, realizing that there was now hope for our son. In the same way, the missing body and the reports of Jesus' resurrection gave the disciples hope that Jesus was really alive again.

Many of us are like Thomas. We need proof. Do you still need proof? God asks you today to believe that Jesus is alive. Jesus asks you to come to Him, and He promises He will not send you away. Will you believe in Him? Will you give up all rights to your own life?

God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus,

*He came to live, heal, and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.*

*Because He lives I can face tomorrow,
Because he lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.*

— Gloria and Bill Gaither
Ambassador Hymnal No.545

**Rejoice with me this
Easter! Jesus is alive! He
gives each believer hope that
we too shall live. He is risen!
He is alive!**



— Pastor James Rasmussen
AFLC Director of Evangelism

sound bites

**Easter is to our faith
what water is to the
ocean, what
stone is to the
mountain, what
blood is to your body.**

— *Raymond I. Lindquist*

Nowhere in the writing of the Apostles is the empty tomb mentioned. There was no need to mention it, for everyone in Jerusalem knew it was empty. Why argue about an accepted fact? Jesus had risen from the dead. He was no longer there. The tomb was empty! The empty tomb stands above all human history to proclaim that death is not the end to life.

— *Daniel E. Fountain*

**The stone was rolled away
from the door, not to permit
Christ to come out, but to
enable the disciples to go in.**

— *Peter Marshall*

2 This Easter, more than ever, I understand that Jesus dying on the cross, and rising in victory over death, is all that makes my otherwise confusing life understandable.
— *Terry Muck*

The story of Easter is the story of
3 God's wonderful window of divine surprise.
— *Carl Knudsen*

The Gospel which the Church proclaims to the world every Easter is not an embalmed memory of something that lit up the screen of the past — it is the offer of up-to-the-minute fellowship with a living Person, risen and radiant, vital and victorious.
5
— *Johnstone G. Patrick*

Death defied and defeated



— Pastor Edward C. Strom
Emmanuel and
Hauge Lutheran Parish
Kenyon, Minnesota

Some people like living on the edge. They get a thrill doing things most individuals would not even consider. What most people shy away from, they scoff and laugh at. Danger is something to be faced, challenged and defeated. We may marvel at their exploits, or we may think these individuals need help! It simply is not normal to enjoy such events.

▲ A different view of death

One thing all mankind struggles with is death. Even the bravest of the brave shudder as they contemplate it.

It is the great unknown. We cannot experience it and live to tell about it! It is something we all must face.

We are mortal. Our bodies may mature with age, but after a time the aging process catches up and we will have to face death, unless Jesus returns before our appointed time. Yet, as Christians, we view death differently than the world does (I Thessalonians 4:13).

We have hope — hope centered in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3). What a difference He makes!

The Scriptures tell us “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), “the soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4), “for all mankind have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 6:23). Matters look bleak here! Where is our hope?

Scripture also tells us “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). How can we reconcile these passages of Scripture? How could Jesus remove us from a place of wrath and place us under God’s grace and mercy? Isaiah answers that question for us in the 53rd chapter and

the sixth verse: “but the Lord hath laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus not only paid our penalty, thereby eliminating our debt, but He also eliminated the consequence of our debt. He conquered death itself by rising from the dead! His resurrection guarantees our own resurrection as well (I Thessalonians 4:14; I Corinthians 15:20, 22).

The miracle of Easter, the risen Christ, gives us, as believers, a present hope and power, as well as a future power and residence! Christ’s resurrection truly is the Father’s benediction to the Son’s words on the cross: “It is finished.” Christ’s victory becomes my victory through faith! Because He died and rose again, death’s stranglehold on me has been broken. I have now been born twice (physically and spiritually) so that I will only die once (physically). Death need not be a matter for concern any longer, for my Shepherd walks with me even there (Psalm 23:4). For believers, death is not “goodbye.” It is not the end; it is merely, “see you later” (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

▲ A transformed people

Jesus’ resurrection led to a transformation in the lives of the disciples. This reality changed the cowardly, fearful, despondent group into the world’s most successful evangelists. At Pentecost (Acts 2), Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell, empower, and speak through this band of men. Jesus used these earthen vessels to give birth to the Christian Church. They became the new mouthpieces of God to share the life-giving, sin-liberating gospel to a lost and dying world! We are the fruit of their initial labors.



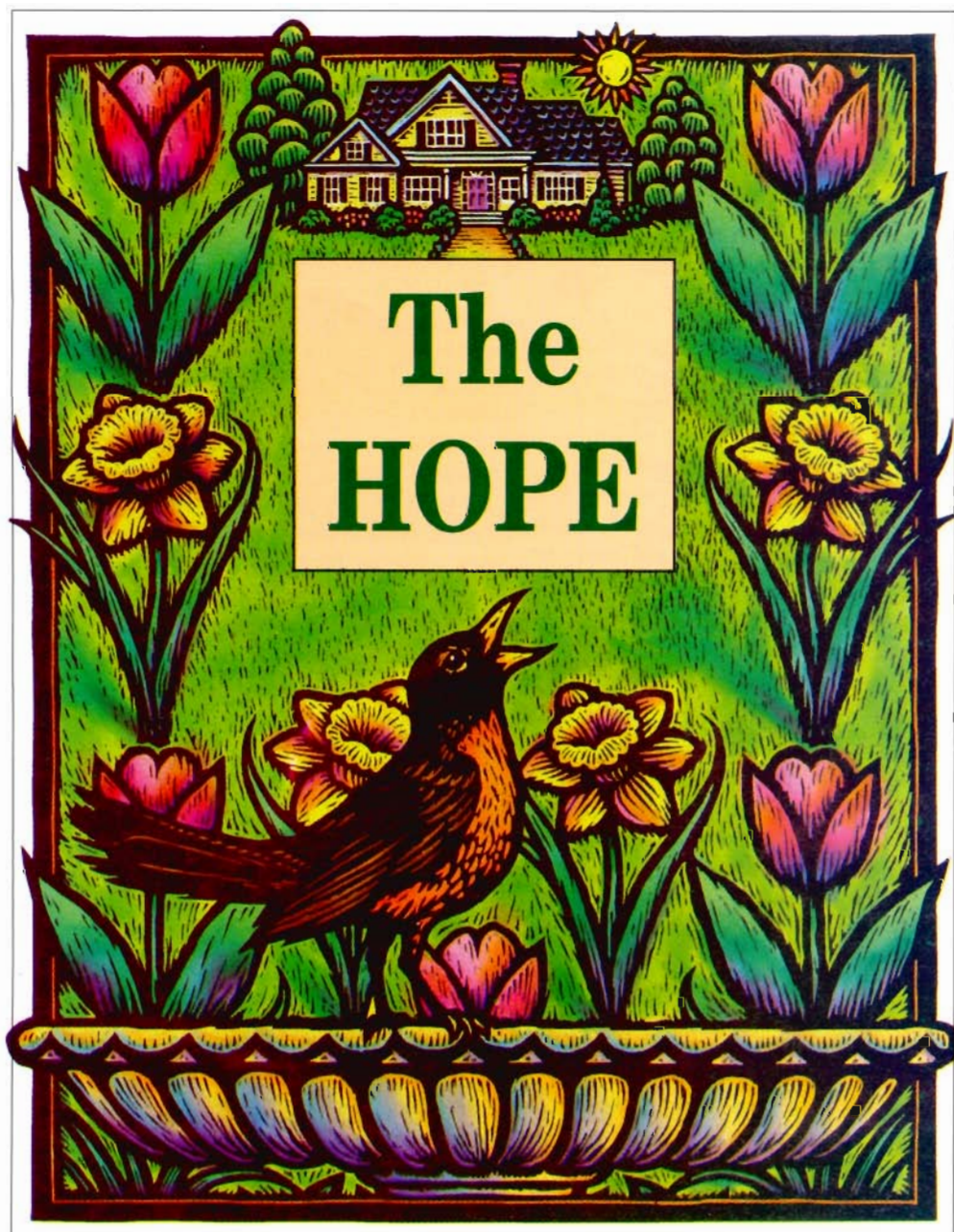
This indwelling of the Spirit was not limited to the disciples only! Jesus promised Him to all believers. God now dwells within us as well! What a blessed hope this gives. The God who saved us, now lives within us. He not only paid the price for our sin, cleansed us from sin and clothed us with His righteousness, but He has chosen to live within us in the closest way possible — in our heart (Revelation 3:20). It is that reality that gives us peace and joy amidst all circumstances. **Even when we come to face death itself, we may**

rest assured that the living Savior will see us through!



(Rev. Edward C. Strom and his wife Louanne and daughter Amy Jo are serving Emmanuel and Hauge Lutheran Churches in Kenyon, Minnesota. Rev. Strom has been serving there since November 1997. Pastor Strom formerly served congregations in the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. He was placed on the AFLC Clergy Roster at a recent coordinating committee meeting.)

— Jeanette Nelson
Maranatha Free Lutheran
Houghton, Michigan



It was a beautiful sunny morning in early June of 1993 when my family and I were joined by a small group of friends at Mountain View Cemetery to once again look upon the wooden casket containing the remains of my beloved husband of 33 years. Here in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan the annual snowfall exceeds 200 inches and winter interment must wait till spring. My pastor led us in prayer at the graveside and I shall always remember the warmth of hearing the sound of the voices of my two little grandchildren as they joined with the adults reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Even the sound of birds in that quiet peaceful place added their blessing. The words in The Song of Solomon fit that occasion. "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" (2:11). The hope of the Resurrection is never so wonderful than when we experience this time of temporary farewell.

As I write this, winter is deep upon the landscape, but the hope of another spring is there too. As I muse on the events of my life, it never ceases to fill me with the wonder of a caring heavenly Father in times of both sunshine

and shadow. We live in a fallen world and into each life some rain will come.

At age 29, after the birth of my second child, rheumatoid arthritis moved in and has stayed ever since. The struggles have been many but the lessons learned have been beneficial, particularly that of being patient in trials and asking Jesus for added strength to go the extra mile.

I have been fortunate to receive the help of medical technology and new knees, hips and the fusion of finger bones have made life a bit more functional for me. The same year after cancer took my husband, I, too, confronted cancer. Needless to say, I leaned heavily on my Lord through the surgery and treatments which followed. As always, God arranged things in countless ways to ease the difficulties. Great is His faithfulness!

God has blessed me with neighbors and friends who do the everyday chores as I am physically lacking the ability to do even the simplest of tasks. I have received so much from willing hearts and hands. I am no longer so silly not to hesitate to ask for help. I take great comfort from Philippians 3:21, "When He comes back He will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like His own, using the same mighty power that He will use to conquer all else everywhere."

Life for me was once so busy. As my illness progressed, so many doors closed. I sometimes wonder what my ministry is now. I guess it must be to be an encourager and a prayer warrior for others. Only heaven knows the power of James 5:16b, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

There have been gallons of coffee through the years, talk across my kitchen table and warm hugs too. As much as I enjoy company, I relish the quiet times. The Lord gave me a creative gift and for over 25 years, I have crafted apple dolls which have filled my hours most adequately.

With each passing day, the hope of the Resurrection becomes more real. How thrilling it was for those first disciples when they learned of Jesus' resurrection! The wonder of that miracle causes my heart to once again praise and thank Him. He graciously provides and answers prayer. There is power and joy in the Resurrection. The best is yet to be!



Because He lives, our relationships are not the same

As incredible as the Resurrection was that first Easter morning, another miracle occurred 50 days later. On Pentecost morning, 120 followers of Jesus were actually together in the same place, at the same time! Acts 2:1 tells us that these pre-Pentecost believers were unified; they "were all together in one place." They gathered together wanting nothing more than the presence of God! No one skipped because of soccer practice, paper routes, or "must-see-TV."

Such unity among believers seems like a miracle because it's so rare today. More and more church people are becoming "Sunday morning only" Christians, and 70 per cent of Americans believe that you can be a Christian and never go to church at all, according to a *USA Weekend Poll*. What has happened to the body of Christ? What brought the early Christians together? Why was togetherness a reality for them and why is it such a struggle for us? How can we restore the unity that has been lost?

The answer is found in Luke 24 and Acts 1, the account of the early Church just before Pentecost. Jesus' resurrection transformed the way believers related to each other.

United by a clear purpose

The Resurrection unified early believers by giving them a clear purpose. These people had a mission! During the 40 days that Jesus spent with them after Easter, His disciples became convinced that Jesus was alive, that He would continue to work through them by the Holy Spirit, and that they were to be "witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The differences between

United in Christ

the Galileans and Judeans were overlooked and they took steps to appoint another apostle to make their group complete and prepared for Pentecost.

Are we Christians united today by a common purpose? We are still to be witnesses to a dying world. Yet, the average congregation in America brings one person to saving faith in Jesus Christ once every 22 years.

Jesus didn't die on a cross and rise from the dead so we could jet ski and hang out at the mall. We have a job to do!

Too many churches are more concerned with survival, maintenance, building programs, or making people comfortable, than they are with the salvation of souls. But what would happen if we Christians realized our true purpose?

In 1992 Arthur Martinez took over an ailing Sears, Roebuck, & Co., a business that had overextended itself with insurance, banking and real estate ventures. Martinez transformed Sears by focusing on the original purpose of the company: retail merchandise.

In a similar way, we the Church should focus on our original purpose. America is now the fifth largest unchurched nation on earth. Only seven per cent of the adults in this nation have a personal relationship with Christ according to the George Barna Report. It is time to get focused!

United by a common passion

The Resurrection united the early Church by giving its members a passion. Nothing could lead these Christians to believe they were mistaken. Because Jesus was alive they had an overwhelming desire to experience and please God, and show His

love. These folks had joy and met "continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:52-53). Their passion was for the will of God to be accomplished in their lives. They "joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:4) and had a great love for each other.

Where is our passion for God and the company of other believers? Are we passionate about anything but what color to paint the walls? We hold the key to life, the secret to the mysteries of the kingdom of God, the message that can turn our world upside down! We have a living Savior who is just as real and powerful today as He ever was.

Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls retired recently. He was known as a "practice player," or one who worked just as intensely on the practice floor as he did during the games. "For the Love of the Game" is his latest book title. It explains why he did it. He simply had a passion for the game. May God change our hearts to have a passion for Christ and His gospel!

The prayer of many today is revival. We are Christians in desperate need of a touch from the Holy Spirit, so that we may go out in unity of purpose and renewed passion for Christ and for others.

— *Pastor Kevin Garner*
Fox River Lutheran
Marseilles, Illinois



Frightened sheep became

“**T**hen Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd ... ‘Listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him. ... God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact” (Acts 2:14,22-24,32).

Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news we bring:

Alleluia

The Lord of Life is ris’n this day;
Bring flow’rs of song to strew His way;
Let all the world rejoice and say;

Alleluia

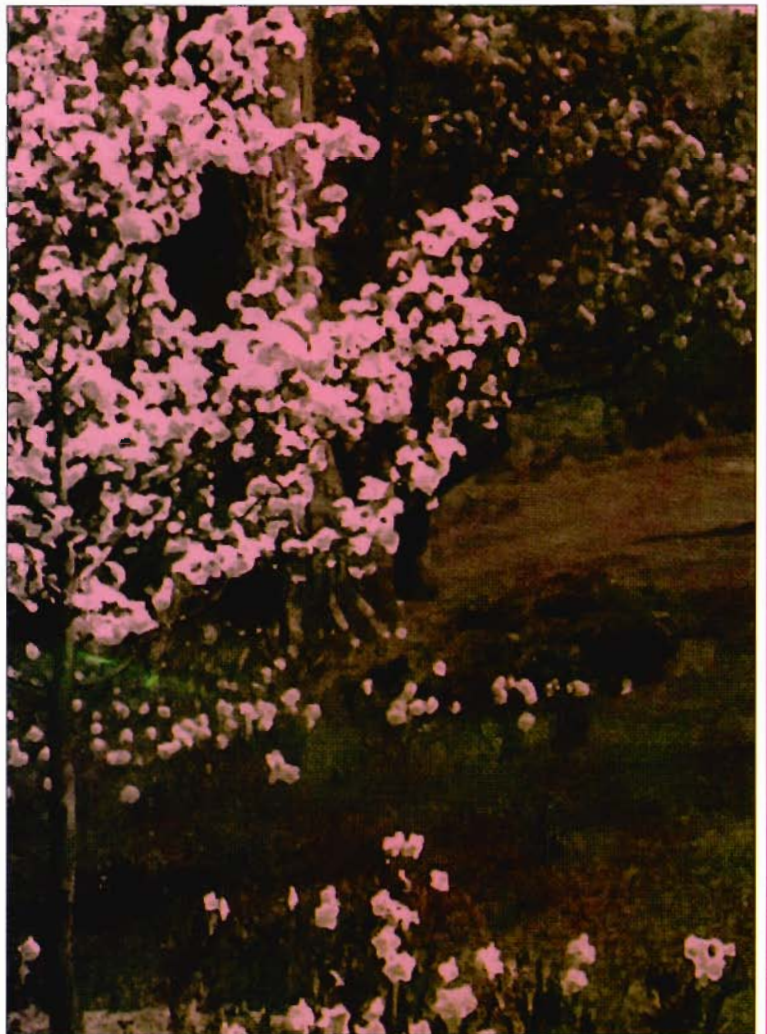
Praise we in songs of victory
That love, that life which cannot die,
And sing with hearts uplifted high;

Alleluia

Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
And sing today with one accord,
The life laid down, the life restored:

Alleluia

— Cyril A. Alington
AMBASSADOR HYMNAL No. 105



bold ambassadors



— *Pastor Al Pinno*
Living Word Lutheran
Eagan, Minnesota

SSomeone said, "There are four great compelling motives that move men to action: fear, hope, faith and love, but the greatest of these is fear!"

Newspaper columnist Ann Landers apparently receives about 10,000 letters a month. She was asked if there was any one problem which predominated in the letters she received. She answered, "Fear."

Professor Harold Urey, a Nobel Prize winning chemist, wrote a pamphlet entitled, "I'm a Frightened Man"

dealing with the reality of nuclear weapons. In it he said, "I write to frighten you. I am a frightened man myself. All of the scientists I know are frightened — frightened for their lives — and frightened for your life." The press recently reported that President Clinton was having trouble sleeping because of this fear of a biological or chemical weapons attack by terrorists on some of our cities.

Why are people afraid of these weapons, or afraid of the dark, or of heights, or planes, or cancer, or people, or whatever else it may be? Most fears are rooted in one fear: the fear of death. Are you afraid to die? The reality is as the Holy Spirit says in His Word that people live their whole lives as slaves to their fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).

This was certainly true of those first disciples and followers of our Lord before His resurrection. From Thursday evening until Sunday evening, when the Lord appeared to them, they lived in fear of death, fear of being arrested and killed or maybe even crucified like Jesus (John 20:19). These men thought their life was almost over. Their world had collapsed on them. They had trusted in Christ to save Israel and now He was dead and His enemies were in control. Those hours after His crucifixion were a nightmare filled with fear. With their Shepherd taken away, they had become like frightened sheep.



**"When they were
no longer afraid
to die for Jesus,
they were
no longer afraid
to live for Him!"**

Resurrection Sunday became transformation Sunday for them. When Jesus, who had been crucified, appeared to them with His resurrected body their lives began an amazing transformation. Their fear of death, of suffering, of people, began to melt away as the reality of Christ's resurrection from the dead began to sink in. They didn't run and hide anymore from those who crucified their Savior. Instead, as recorded in Acts, they received God's Holy Spirit and went and publicly identified themselves as

Jesus' followers. They called upon all people to repent of their sin and wickedness. They proclaimed the Resurrection and salvation in His Name to everyone. Even when they were later arrested for preaching about Christ, and threatened with death by stones, lions, fire, or crucifixion nails, they were still unafraid and continued to boldly preach.

The reality of Christ's resurrection from the dead destroyed their fear of death, and set them free to

live in love and faith and the glorious Resurrection hope. All their lives, like all people, were held in slavery to their fear of death, but now they were set free! "So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). When they were no longer afraid to die for Jesus, they were no longer afraid to live for Him!

Day by day, as we meditate on the truth of Christ, on His grace and mercy to us on the cross, and the reality of the hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, the Holy Spirit sets us free from our fears and we are set free for living in faith, hope, and love. The Lord knows, that like sheep, we are all easily frightened by any danger or threatening situation. But through His Spirit He transforms us frightened sheep into His ambassadors. We now press on in the promise of Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."



Be a bold soldier for Jesus

W

When the word “evangelism” is brought up, often people say things like: “I could never do that;” “I was not blessed with the gift of evangelism;” “My neighbor knows I go to church;” “I just don’t seem to have the time;” “I would be totally afraid;” or “I’m not sure what to say.”

Some of these are valid concerns, ones that I can understand. My life before coming to know Jesus was filled with many fears, weaknesses and anxieties. I could never have imagined myself speaking up in a

crowd, or for that matter, sharing Christ’s love with another person one-on-one.

I couldn’t have shared His love, because I did not belong to Jesus. There was no conviction concerning His love, power, protection and concern for me as His child.

I was approached from time to time by God’s soldiers. Why would I come to the conclusion that those who came to me were soldiers? Even though I would laugh at them and try to embarrass them, this did not seem to deter them. They kept on.

I look at a soldier as a person who is sold out and tied in to what they would be willing to die for. These people left me wondering what it was that kept them moving forward.

Why do some brothers and sisters seem to be more bold and have more courage? Let’s take a look back at the early Church and our brothers and sisters of that time.

Then, as well as now, God’s people did not always live

up to God’s full potential for their lives. We see fear, anxiety and a lack of conviction. Look at Peter. He loved Jesus, but out of fear he denied Him three times. Or consider Joseph of Arimathea, who stayed in the background until he gained the courage needed to ask for the body of Jesus to bury it after the crucifixion. “So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body” (Mark 15:42,43).

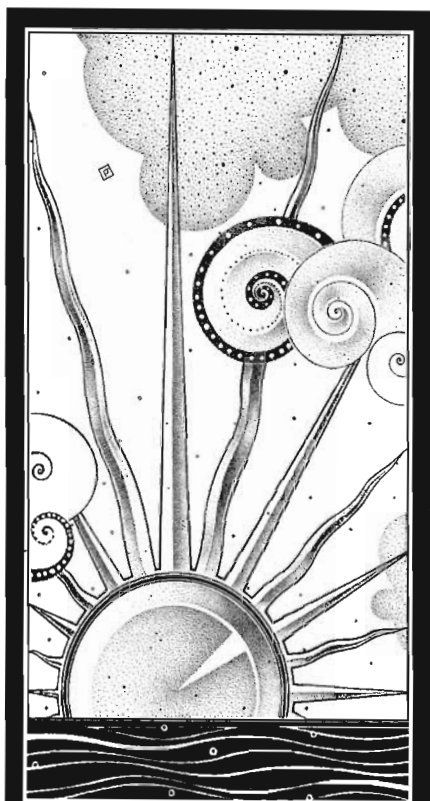
We see Jesus’ own disciples who, after the crucifixion, locked themselves in the upper room because of fear. “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” (John 20:19). Many of those who ended up coming to the forefront to accomplish great things for God, had at one time been hanging back.

Why do some lack the drive or become discouraged about being the best witnesses they could be, while others seem to be full of courage? Thinking of this reminds me of a time when my daughter was two years old. While we were playing she fell from a distance in the air and landed on her head. She was out cold. It seemed to me she was not breathing and her eyes were rolled back into her head. My first feeling was panic. I was running everywhere but doing nothing. I was thankful for the people who had taken the time to gain the knowledge that was needed to give us the help we needed at that time.

In a similar way we must take time to gain a knowledge of God, knowing who He is and of His love for us. Then we can help those who are full of fear, running everywhere but doing nothing.

God will give us all the help we need. He told our early brothers and sisters to wait on Him and He would provide and direct their path. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). God is our total protection and ultimate strength. “The Lord is my strength and song” (Exodus 15:2). “The Lord is my strength and my shield” (Psalm 28:7).

What we need to be a soldier and witness for the Lord is found in Him. “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (I Peter 4:11).



**Living with a
new attitude**

Changed givers and changed giving

The Scriptures have a great deal to say about how we handle what God has given us. As early as Genesis 4, we are told how Cain and Abel brought offerings to God. The Old Testament describes the burnt offerings, peace offerings, holy offerings, giving first fruits and tithing. We also learn that it is not just bringing our gifts to the Lord, but it is the attitude of our heart as we bring them. This is why Abel's offering was acceptable to God and Cain's was not. The Old Testament taught about offering that which is perfect and without blemish and giving the best and the first to the Lord.

After Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, there was a dramatic change. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples had a new responsibility, commitment, direction, motivation and enthusiasm.

As the disciples and others were filled with the Holy Spirit, the work of the early Church began. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:41-43).

The disciples had a new attitude and view of stewardship. Nothing was more important than spreading the good news of the gospel. Many of them risked their lives

and even lost their lives in the work. Worldly possessions were not treated as personal property but as God's gifts which He shared with them and which they in turn shared with their fellow Christians.

They put the needs of others first. They gave from their hearts. Their priorities were with God's will. Their only concern was about the work of the Church, namely the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

So what can we learn about stewardship from these people? The amount we give is not as important as the state and attitude of the heart that is giving out of obedience to God's will.

Stewardship is not just giving, but seeing that the gospel is spread to all peoples and that souls are saved for the Lord. It involves prayerfully seeking God's will and then being obedient to it.

It was reported recently that this year the budget of the AFLC was met for the first time since the last year we had an evangelist. Is it coincidence that this year we have an evangelism director and once again we met the budget? Is God not telling us to do His will (evangelize), and stewardship will be accomplished?

Our own stewardship can be accomplished in many ways through the giving of time, talents, money and other gifts. However, only through a right and willing heart that comes through a personal relationship with our Lord, are our gifts acceptable to Him.



**"The disciples
had a new
attitude
and view of
stewardship."**

It's being filled with God's gift of the Holy Spirit that makes it possible to speak out. It's having a knowledge of who and what our God is all about.

There is nothing like being used by God to lead another to His awesome presence. Be willing to let God use you. This is a marvelous time to be a bold soldier for God. Let's not waste it.

To be a soldier we must spend quality time in God's Word. And we must have the conviction that in the end, what will matter most will not be the things we have collected, but the love we have shared, the relationships we have had, and the people we have touched for the Lord.



— Arnold Johnson
AFLC Stewardship Committee
Larimore, North Dakota

Our living Lord

The heart of the believer rings again during another Easter service with the words of the great resurrection hymn: "Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!"

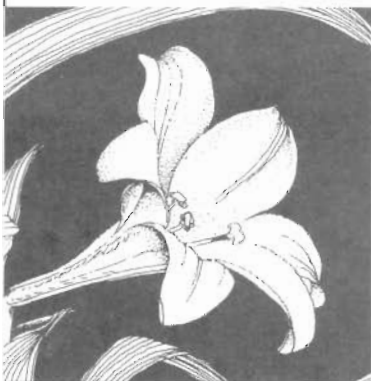
What does it really mean to worship the living Lord? Isn't it more important to worship the crucified Savior, remembering that He died for my sins?

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about some who denied the resurrection. If there is no resurrection from the dead, he declared, not even Christ has been raised, which means "your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." Then he joyously reminded them: "Christ indeed has been raised from the dead" (I Corinthians 15:12-20). It is clear from these words that the living Lord is the assurance of the Christian's hope. Paul's letter to the Philippians also refers to the resurrection of Christ (3:10), revealing that the living Lord is the assurance of the Christian's power.

During my devotional reading a couple of months ago, I came across an interesting phrase in the Old Testament: "As I live," says the Lord." A look into a concordance showed 23 instances of this expression (plus a quote in the New Testament), with most of them in the Book of Ezekiel. Over and over again the fact that we worship the living Lord is emphasized as the assurance that He will keep His promises.

One of my seminary teachers said that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's "Amen!" to the Redeemer's word, "It is finished!" To worship the living Lord is to have the assurance that the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin indeed, for His sacrifice was fully acceptable to the Father for me.

May your worship this Easter season be renewed by the hopeful and powerful assurance that our Lord lives! Because He lives, I too will live!



— *Pastor Robert L. Lee*



Take a taste test!

"Therefore, rid yourself of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:1-3 NIV).

The Christian life follows the process in these verses. First, turning from evil (repentance), second, desiring the things of God, and third, growing up in our salvation.

Babies also naturally follow this course: birth, nourishment, and growth.

The first deep unrestrained need a baby has is to satisfy his physical hunger. This is an inborn need. However, if a baby cannot follow the normal progression of eating, this natural instinct is lost.

Our youngest son had a gastrostomy (a feeding tube) for over two years. He didn't know the natural process to feel hunger, take in food and feel satisfied. We smile when we think of the antics we performed so we could even put food in his mouth. This food served no purpose for him but often made him gag and choke. For him, food was foreign, annoying, and repulsive. After the aid of an oral thera-



pist, it still took a long time to teach him something that should have been as natural as breathing.

There are also new babes in Christ who need a different approach to taking in God's Word. Maybe they didn't know anything about Christ until later in life. To them the pure spiritual milk is new, foreign, puzzling, and maybe even annoying. Their spiritual taste buds were not stimulated by early Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school, youth group, women's missionary federation or other group Bible study. They need to be taught that the pure milk is something precious and desperately needed in their Christian walk. They need loving caregivers and patient therapists with new ideas. Some new believers may have been "tube fed" for years, but the Word of God did not speak to them personally. Now, after Christ came into their heart, they need to start tasting, feeling, loving, and craving that precious Word.

At our WMF Bible study this month, let's be aware of the unique people meeting together. The hungry babies, the tube-fed church goers, those who feel that the words of Jesus are foreign, even frightening.

— Jane Rasmussen
Medicine Lake Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

Make a personal goal to stimulate the appetite of others. Comment on a Scripture passage that you enjoyed today. Tell how a sermon or Sunday school lesson spoke to you. Talk about spiritual things over coffee with a friend or your spouse. Place Bible verses throughout your home, in your car or in your child's lunch box. Be in God's Word. Read Deuteronomy 11:18-20 and Colossians 3:16.

Paul Cedar tells of a third-generation missionary "working in cultures where Christianity was very much a minority faith. He discovered a marvelous and effective approach to those who are agnostic or opposed to Christ. He simply encouraged them to 'taste' the Word of God and what He has told them about Himself in Jesus Christ. His approach is very honest and logical. Before you reject Jesus Christ, you should at least explore His teachings and take a little taste of Him. Only then can you know whether He tastes good or bad. Only then can you authentically decide to follow Him or reject Him.

"The results of this evangelistic approach have been most encouraging. In short, just as Peter is teaching, when we taste of the things of the Lord, we find that they are good and satisfying. Tasting leads to the deep desiring and craving for the pure milk of God's Word."

We need to crave the things of Jesus. Crave the Words of life. Remember that if we go on a starvation diet, we won't live long physically or spiritually. And we certainly won't be very valuable in God's kingdom during this time of weakness. Yes, "taste and see that the Lord is good." Keep feasting on His perfect Word, and pass it on (Psalm 34:8).



Faith, South Dakota —

Nearly 70 women from the Faith-Eagle Butte area gathered for a Women's Winter Retreat at a Spearfish motel during February 26-27. One of the retreat coordinators, Linda Olsen of Bethel Lutheran in Faith said the event was planned to encourage women to trust the Lord through the struggles of everyday life. Area ladies shared on the theme verse from Psalm 62:8, "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."



The passing of one of the last itinerant lay preachers

Evangelist Clifford R. Anderson, 93, Cokato, Minnesota passed away on February 3, 1999. He was born on August 30, 1905 near Cokato. After his father's death in 1918, he had to help his mother with farm work. He finished the tenth grade. In 1922 he married Violet Hedlund. They moved to Minneapolis where Clifford worked at a variety of jobs, including a taxi driver and street car conductor. In 1929 they came to know the Lord and attended "The Little Homelike Church," later known as Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls.

Clifford and Vi sought to serve the Lord in any way their gifts could be used. He organized a string band and for three summers conducted street meetings in area towns each Saturday night. While others played and sang, Clifford would bring a salvation message. His burden to pass out salvation tracts led to his becoming vice president of "The Little Homelike Church Tract Mission." He was granted permission to set up a concession space at the Minnesota State Fair to pass out tracts and talk to people about their relationship with the Lord. This work has continued for 50 years.

In 1941 they went into full-time Christian ministry and joined the newly formed World Mission Prayer League. They served as missionaries in a Mexican border town. Later they returned to Minnesota where he became a lay pastor in the

Augustana Synod. He served eight parishes belonging to three Lutheran synods before embarking on 17 years as a traveling evangelist. He preached in congregations of ten different Lutheran synods as well as for churches in other denominations in 69 countries on six continents.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Violet in 1994. He is survived by three daughters and two sons: Glenyce Zipf, Cokato, Minnesota; Muriel Koskovich, Shakopee, Minnesota; Arlayne Gillespie, Cambridge, Minnesota; Jerome Anderson also of Cambridge; and David Anderson, Phoenix, Arizona; 19 grandchildren and 39 great-grandchildren.

Blessed be his memory.

Communities

With the passing of the late evangelist Clifford R. Anderson, we have cause to reflect a bit on a passing era in our history of Lutheran religious life here in the Midwest. I will purposely narrow these reflections to the laymen, although there were many of the clergy involved in these pursuits.

Clifford was one of the last of the itinerant lay preachers that mingled among us, preaching in churches, missions, schools, town halls, streets, homes and the like.

These engagements as a rule involved daily meetings for a few days to a week or two. The evangelist had to be his own manager and secretary arranging his schedules for meetings and travel arrangements. They traveled mainly by train or bus, but at times hitchhiking or possibly by car if they could afford one.

The call of God caused these men from various backgrounds and professions to go forth to preach the gospel. It was said of E.L. Scotvold that he arose from his chair at the card table and announced to his buddies, "This is my last card game." He turned to the Lord and became a prince of preachers.

A tribute to God's messenger

— *Pastor Alvin Grothe
Astoria, Oregon*

"And He Himself gave some to be ... evangelists ..."
(Ephesians 4:11).

Clifford Anderson was certainly called to be an evangelist. He was convinced of that, and he carried out that work, even in old age.

My earliest memory of Pastor Anderson is from my late teenage years when I recall him preaching in my home church at Badger, Minnesota. My mom and dad would invariably have the visiting evangelist stay at our home in

the country. Having small bedroom space, no running water and no inside bathroom did not deter them, nor was it of any consequence to Pastor Anderson or the others. This was a huge influence in my life spiritually and a lesson in hospitality toward God's servants.

Pastor Anderson also came to preach after I was married and living on my own farm outside of Badger. I remember his powerful sermons of sin and grace, law and gospel, driven by a strong conviction, a vision for the lost and

saw revival break out

— H. Donald Hanson
Erskine, Minnesota

The thrust of these men was truly a ministry of reconciliation with both God and man. Their messages were simple, straight-forward law and gospel "With repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Yes, it was not only to flee from the wrath to come but to live in newness of life under the Word and Spirit of God.

Many a community saw awakenings and revival break out under the preaching of these faithful servants, bringing new life and refreshment into congregations with prayer and fellowship groups becoming active. Often from these groups pastors, missionaries and teachers were called forth.

God honored these men who dared to call sin as sin and were often both loved and hated. Such are the rewards of bearing the reproach of Christ. "The servant is not greater than his Lord" (John 13:16).

We must not forget the wives of these men who cooperated with loving sacrifice, staying home alone many weeks at a time, managing and caring for their families, often times with meager means to meet the everyday needs. These women are surely our unsung heroines.

We shall name a few of the men

who served among us: Peder Foster-vold, Ole Barnes, Wilhelm Vasvig, Eddie Berg, John Carlson, E.L. Scotvold, Oscar Knutson, Clarence Haaland, Joseph Erickson, Jay Erickson, Nels Pederson and Philip Hanson. Many of these men traveled widely. Some were involved at times

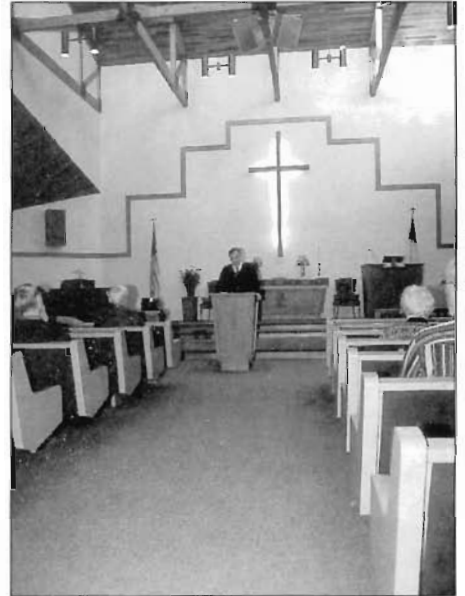
in other areas of gospel work such as tent meetings, radio broadcasting and teaching ministries.

We are deeply indebted to these faithful servants. It is with pleasure we pay tribute to these heroes of the faith who humbly served their generation. To God be the glory!



Ishpeming, Michigan — Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran is hosting a series of evangelistic meetings during April 16-18. AFLBS Vision 2004 Director Tonnes Pollestad will be the guest speaker. His theme will be "Finding Salvation." For more information call the church office at (906) 485-5714.

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran hosted an area-wide evangelism rally on February 5-6. Pictured is Evangelism Director James Rasmussen. He and AFLC Evangelism Commission members led the meetings and workshops.



confidence in God and His Word. He drove the truth home and it has influenced me till this day.

What energy he had! I believe he was raised on high octane milk and fortified oatmeal every day. God truly fitted him for his work as an evangelist.

Clifford and his wife also visited us when we were serving in Stacy, Minnesota. He would show slides of his travels to different mission fields to preach and to encourage the missionaries.

The last several times we had the privilege to be with him was at

annual conferences. How thankful I am for those times. The fervor, the energy, the burden for lost souls and eagerness to share the Word had not weakened. What an evangelist! What a pillar and stalwart soldier of the Cross! And what an indelible influence on my life for righteousness.

When a pillar like this is gone we sense a deep loss. It is earth's loss and heaven's gain. Blessed be the memory of evangelist Clifford Anderson. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."



Mariah Christine Olson, one-day-old daughter of AFLC Youth Director Kevin and Pam Olson, passed away on February 13, 1999. Memorial services were held at Faith Lutheran in Shakopee, Minnesota on February 16, Pastor Del Palmer, officiating. Mariah is survived by her parents, two brothers and one sister; Nathan, Naomi and Andrew.

Mrs. Myrl Moland of Fertile, Minnesota passed away January 15, 1999 at the age of 81 after an 18-month battle with cancer. The funeral service was held at Maple Bay Free Lutheran of rural Mentor, Minnesota. She is survived by four children, one of which is Pastor Ken Moland of Kirkland, Washington.

AFLBS Spring Tours

Check local congregations for times.

Choir tour

April 4 - St. Petrie Lutheran,
Leland, Illinois
St. Olaf Lutheran,
Montgomery, Illinois
April 5 - Bethlehem Lutheran,
Morris, Illinois
April 6 - St. Paul's Lutheran,
Clyde, Ohio
April 7 - St. Mark's Lutheran,
Chesterland, Ohio
April 8 - St. John Lutheran,
Ambridge, Pennsylvania
April 9 - Advent Ev. Lutheran,
Pichboro, Pennsylvania
April 11 - Bethel Lutheran
Brethren, Huntington Station,
New York
Nanuet Lutheran Brethren
Nanuet, New York
April 13 - Ruthfred Lutheran,
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania
April 14 - Peace Lutheran,
Canal Winchester, Ohio
April 15 - Peace Lutheran,
Defiance, Ohio
April 16 - Christian Free Lutheran,
Wheatland, Iowa
April 17 - Hosanna Free Lutheran,
St. James, Minnesota
April 18 - Emmaus Lutheran,
Bloomington, Minnesota

Proclaim tour

(Proclaim is the name of the group at AFLBS that was formerly known as the Choral Club.)
April 4 - Bethel Free Lutheran,
Grafton, North Dakota
Victory Free Lutheran,
Park River, North Dakota
April 5 - Bethel Lutheran,
Culbertson, Montana
April 7 - Faith Free Lutheran,
Kalispell, Montana
April 8 - New Vision Free Lutheran,
Spokane, Washington
April 9 - Triumph Lutheran,
Ferndale, Washington
April 11 - Elim Lutheran,
Lake Stevens, Washington
Calvary Lutheran,
Everett, Washington
Atonement Lutheran
Arlington, Washington
April 12 - Bethany Lutheran,
Astoria, Oregon
April 15 - Lutheran Church of Hope,
Loveland, Colorado
April 16 - Faith Lutheran,
Fairbury, Nebraska
April 17 - Salem Lutheran,
Radcliffe, Iowa
April 18 - St. Paul's Lutheran,
Jewell, Iowa

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thankful for the ARC

"Daddy, will we be able to talk to Noah?" asked little Nathan, our son Peder's boy as they drove into the Association Retreat Center. The occasion was our family reunion over the Christmas holidays and the location was the ARC near Osceola, Wisconsin.

While Nathan did not get to talk to Noah, he did meet Eric Westlake, the man who captains the ship called the ARC. He and his crew do such a good job of making the ARC a special place of meeting. For our family, it was one of our never-to-be-forgotten times together.

Five of our six children were there with their families to spend six days over the Christmas holiday. Clara and I are, of course, down in Mexico and our children are spread out from the Caribbean to California to Oregon to Wisconsin. We appreciated a place to come to and the time to be together before we returned to Mexico in February.

But this is not about us. I am writing to tell you about the place that God has provided for conferences, camps, retreats and small group seminars. And now you can add to that list — family reunions. The facilities fit our needs perfectly allowing each family to have separate sleeping quarters, plenty of room to move about for the little children and, of course, the great outdoors for activities.

No, Nathan, we did not get to talk to Noah but we had time to talk with one another and to talk with Jesus as we had our times of devotion. We constantly gave thanks to God for the ARC and Eric and his crew that made the stay such an added blessing.

— Pastor Richard Gunderson
Puebla, Mexico

Four generations gathered at the ARC. Great grandpa Bouchard, 90, (far right) joined the Gunderson reunion.



Eastern European academy facing a crisis

The Baltic nation of Estonia emerged from the oppressive cloud of communism and gained her independence in 1991. Six months later eight Lutheran pastors (including AFLC President Robert Lee), from the United States paid a visit to fellow Lutheran pastors in Estonia as a gesture of encouragement from one Lutheran family to another.

While there, they met with Pastor Eenok Haamer and discovered he was carrying an impassioned vision to establish a Christian Academy/College in Tartu that would be closely linked to Tartu University. He envisioned a school that would provide a biblically based, Christ-centered and academically rigorous education that would prepare public school teachers and young people to teach the Bible in schools and become equipped for other lay ministries.

The American group offered a

start-up grant of \$10,000 and the academy began holding classes in February 1993. From this humble beginning, the academy has grown to a present enrollment of 120 full-time students.

Enthusiasm is running high for the academy throughout the nation, including government leaders. Pastor Haamer has kept the school operating with limited contributions from a few friends in America, Denmark and Germany. However, the academy is facing a crisis. Until now, the only property it has been able to rent is a small 8' x 14' room for an office and some small hostel rooms for female students who sleep on mattresses on the floor. Classes are held in rooms borrowed from the university, local churches and businesses. Unless the academy finds "a home of its own" there is little likelihood of its survival.

Recently owners of an empty building, damaged by bombs from

World War II, agreed to sell it for about four million Estonian Crowns — or \$308,000. Once remodeled it will be used for classrooms, offices, dining facilities and a dormitory. The building is in an ideal location near the center of Tartu and the university.

Estonians do not have the resources to acquire this property. Many of the pastors earn around \$120 per month, a poverty level salary. AFLC Pastor Don Richman, the executive director for the East European Missions Network has offered to serve as the conduit for contributions to reach the Tartu Academy. EEMN will receive no financial benefit from any contribution as one hundred per cent will be transferred to the account in Estonia.

Contributions may be identified as "Estonia Theological Academy Project" at East European Missions Network, 2526 Horizon Drive, Suite 406, Burnsville, MN 55337



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Lincoln, Illinois — Good Shepherd Lutheran is building their first worship facility, primarily through volunteer workers. The picture above was taken the day they were getting the shingles on and were joined by workers from St. John's Lutheran Church in Milford.

Good Shepherd held its first meeting at "Charlie's garage" in September 1997. They quickly outgrew that and rented a building which originally was a Jewish

synagogue. The congregation has 134 members and is self-supporting, besides paying for the building as they progress. The new church sanctuary will seat approximately 200 people and is located on two and a half acres of land in the northwest part of town. Lay pastor Roger David serves the congregation. Lincoln is a two-college community of about 17,000 in central Illinois, 30 miles south of Bloomington.

Pastor David Wold, Pipestone, Minnesota, will be teaching in churches in Muldova and Romania during April 14-28. Pastor Wold was a missionary in Latvia and Albania for over 11 years with the Greater Europe Mission before coming to serve as pastor of Christ the King Lutheran in 1997.

McVile, North Dakota — New Luther Valley and Bethany of nearby Binford hosted a Valentine's Banquet with Pastor Wes Langaas of Thief River Falls, Minnesota as the speaker. The parish is tailoring their ministries to adjust to their changing population. Two decades ago, New Luther Valley had 72 children in Sunday school. They now have 10. About a year ago, the parish began a widow and widowers' support group, meeting every two weeks for Bible study, sharing and

fellowship. Twenty-one people are involved, and half of them are from outside the parish. Another outreach has been with children. They have started an "All-Star Kids Club" on Thursday afternoons and have up to 32 kids attending.

Grand Forks, North Dakota — Trinity Free Lutheran hosted the Eastern North Dakota District Bible Conference on February 19-20. District pastors, Les Johnson of Minnewauken and Glenn Larsen of Larimore were the evening speakers. Saturday's sessions were led by Marian Christopherson, AFLC Parish Education Director. She spoke on the ministry of the local congregation, biblical foundations in Christian education and spiritual formation, evaluating curriculum and teaching materials for all ages, and teaching music to children.

Oceanside, California — Community Lutheran Church is thanking the Lord for the nine families who have joined them in the last two months. They have prepared part of their property for a seven-house subdivision and are in the process of selling those lots. On the remaining four acres, they expect to build a school for grades K-3. The six-year-old congregation meets in a remodeled garage/school on their property, with the sanctuary seating about 200.

Pastor Orville Heipler serves the congregation. He spent two weeks in Tomsk, Siberia in early March where he taught school administrators a course in "Character Building." It included helps in how to develop Bible study groups. This is a follow-up trip for Pastor Heipler. He worked in Tomsk three years ago in a program sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ. Tomsk is a unique city of 500,000 apartment dwellers located 2,000 miles east of Moscow.

Houston, Texas — Crown of Life Lutheran recently erected a sign on their new property on North Eldridge Parkway, near the growing Westbourne subdivision. Members of the congregation, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Loewe, donated the prime acreage to the church. The site is heavily forested and the first project is to clear the land before they can build. Pastor Gordon Waterman serves the congregation.

Silverhill, Alabama — Zion Lutheran installed their new pastor on February 21. Pastor Paul Jecklin and his wife Carol began their new ministry at Zion on February 1. AFLC President Robert Lee conducted the installation service. The congregation's organist, Michael Coleman recently lectured and performed his own piano work at the "Art Between Centuries" conference in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. Coleman is a music instructor at Pensacola Junior College in nearby Pensacola, Florida.

Amarillo, Texas — Several families are praying with Pastor John Chandler concerning starting a new mission congregation in this community of 160,000 in the Texas Panhandle. There are presently four Lutheran congregations in the city. Three AFLC Home Mission Barnabas teams have conducted vacation Bible schools during recent summers and interest in starting an AFLC congregation is increasing. Pastor Chandler is recently retired and is making his home in Amarillo. For more information contact him at (806) 352-2299.

Amery, Wisconsin — Four people from Amery Free Lutheran returned home on February 12, after two weeks of working in Aguascalientes, Mexico. When Harvey and Amy Mathison, Merle Jacobson and Kathleen Schierkolk left, Springs of Living Water Lutheran had a new pulpit, altar, and baptismal font and the original ones were transferred to the new preaching point in Palomino. Missionaries Giles and Schierkolk are encouraged with the increased interest in the mission work in the Palomino suburb.

Gilbert, Arizona — Calvary Lutheran is currently averaging 70-80 people for Sunday worship and is seeing how the Lord will direct their future. It is common to have worshippers from ten or more states gathered on a Sunday morning. AFLBS graduates, John and Wendy Greven lead the music and Wendy is helping to organize a ladies' Bible study group. According to interim Pastor Walter Johnson, "the congregation is indebted to many friends from around the nation who have given spiritual and financial support."

Janesville, Wisconsin — Trinity Free Lutheran has voted to go off of AFLC Home Mission subsidy. The congregation was organized in 1988 and they built their church in 1991. Pastor Curt Emerson serves the congregation.



The Cokato, Minnesota mission workers were: Arnie Anderson, Pat Voelker, Jim Barka, Craig Anderson, Mike Berg, and Don and Phyllis Stevenson. Pictured above are some of the workers with a few Brazilian friends.

Building in Brazil

— Don and Phyllis Stevenson

On January 15, 1999, a group of short-term mission workers from Good Shepherd Lutheran in Cokato, Minnesota left for Brazil to help complete a new church building in the village of Bateias, about 20 kilometers outside of the city of Curitiba. Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel started this church along with their ministry in another congregation and at the ARCA, a retreat center.

We succeeded in getting a roof on the church and installed a ceiling

in a room at the ARCA. Also the Abels can now negotiate the hill up to their home easier after we poured a section of concrete driveway.

Our days were filled with many interesting experiences which would take too long to relate. However we did leave with a few impressions. Probably the most significant understanding we gained was the extent of the ministry going on in that small community in Brazil. The needs are overwhelming! The Abels, including their children, are truly the hand of the Lord reaching out to help these people with both their spiritual and physical needs. There was never a day when people did not come to the house for food, help with some ailment, or other need. Besides serving the two congregations, the Abels hosted a Bible camp for teens and a vacation Bible school at the ARCA.

Because we worked on the Bateias church, we got better acquainted with those people. Most of them are very poor and the social welfare system is not like we have here in the States. We heard and saw many testimonies of how the

(continued on next page)

Missionaries Darwin and Mary Ann Jackson, Puebla, Mexico are working with two congregations and training local members to lead in the ministry. Recently Mary Ann was inviting neighborhood children to come to her Sunday School class. A five-year-old girl asked her, "Is your church of the cross or of the virgin?" Since the child's family is Catholic, she would not attend a church "of the cross." Pray with the Jacksons that God will plant seeds both for the salvation of the lost, as well as for future evangelists and workers in the church in Mexico.

On January 4, six Bible school students, Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein and Missionary to Brazil, Sonja Dahl left Minneapolis for Chiralla, Andhra Pradesh in the southern part of India, the second most populated nation on earth. Pastor Doug Wagley of New Vision Free Lutheran in Spokane, Washington joined the team at Chiralla. He had been visiting areas further north where he formerly had served as a missionary. What follows is their story of their incredible two-week experience.

Usually by seven each morning, after a bucket bath or shower, it was time for a breakfast of rice, curry, a type of tortilla, and all to be washed down with a Pepsi. Then often up to eight piled into a tiny taxi to one of the 17 villages visited — some were up to five hours away from the home base in Chiralla.

The Bible workers or preparer of the way, John-Babu, (the team nicknamed him "John the Baptist") would advertise their coming through loud speakers from the roof tops of the churches. Sometimes there would be a "Jericho march" with tubla drums through the vil-

An India experience



Leaders of the BFLC welcomed the mission team at Chiralla. AFLBS students who traveled to India were: Paul Haugen, Culbertson, Montana; Sarah Johnson, Sacred Heart, Minnesota; Matt Bruce, Fosston, Minnesota; Kevin Groven, Northwood, North Dakota; Andrea Nelson, LaCrosse, Wisconsin; and Joel Fugleberg, Roseau, Minnesota.

lage and people would throw flowers on them.

Upon arrival the villagers would be singing beautifully to Jesus in their Indian dialect. The team learned a couple of songs in

Telugu and after about three songs and a testimony, Pastor Wagley preached. "I have never seen people so hungry to hear the Word of God," he said. "Many times people would gather and wait for hours just for

BRAZIL

Lord is working in their lives. It was our privilege to see the joy in serving, the love for the people and the desire to bring people to Christ that is so obvious in both Paul and Becky's lives.

The Brazilian people are friendly and made us feel welcome. The language barrier made it difficult to communicate as we would have liked, but we all left feeling we had made friends. The common bond of having a love for Jesus makes it easier to bridge the culture gap. We thank the Lord for His protection and opportunity to share in a small contribution within the ongoing ministry of the mission work in the Curtitba area.



us to show up and then ask to have the Word preached for two hours or more. After every service there were many, many people waiting for the laying on of hands, special prayer, for baptism and to ask the Lord to come into their hearts in response to the Word. In one village there was a notorious woman whose salvation prayer and baptism amazed many of the villagers. Many men prayed to receive Christ or to repent of sins. Hindu women often would pray to receive Christ and in tears ask for God to restore their motherhood." Aggressive "family planning" agencies are traveling into the villages to sterilize the women to rob them of the possibility of motherhood.

The six Bible school students were swarmed by the children after the services. They gave preventive medication and when that was gone, they passed out candy, pennies or toys from home they had stuffed into suitcases. Often the children asked for prayer or just someone to play games with them.

"Ever since I was a child," Andrea Nelson said, "I've wanted to go to India. I would read stories of great missionaries like Amy Carmichael and dream of the day I could go to India and tell the children about Jesus."

Joel Fugleberg said meeting all the children was the best part of the experience. "They were so adorable, full of energy, and happy, even though most lived in extreme poverty." Realizing their sad circumstances broke their hearts, though. AFLBS junior, Sarah Johnson said, "India is such a beautiful country with a twisted sense of ugliness in it. Hinduism has not only captivated the majority of the people but has profoundly captured the entire culture. Their gods and myths have produced hopelessness. It is filthy and garbage lies wherever you look. Everywhere there's people living in it who don't seem to realize that things could be different."

In addition to the gospel services led by Pastor Wagley each day, other services were led by Pastor Enderlein and Dr. Monseth. Dr. Monseth, Free Lutheran Seminary Dean, also led nine days of theologi-



A preaching service was held on the beach at the Bay of Bengal. After the service, Dr. Monseth and some of the Bible school team posed with the BFLC gospel workers.

cal classes for the Bible Faith Lutheran Church pastors, evangelists, and Bible women. Pastor Martin Luther Sastry translated for Dr. Monseth and gave an oral exam to the class at the end of each day's session. (Dr. Monseth and Pastor Enderlien ordained Pastor Sastry during a special service. He is the BFLC's first ordained pastor.)

Reflecting on his time in India, Dr. Monseth said, "What a warm and gracious welcome awaited us from our dear brothers and sisters of the Bible Faith Lutheran Church! How good it was to see Pastor Sastry again and to meet other leaders of the BFLC. Their loving kindness and generous hospitality wherever we went simply overwhelmed us. The topics I covered in my classes were: the doctrines of the Word, the Trinity, the means of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit, the way of salvation, the Christian life; and practical subjects such as the preparation of sermons and pastoral visitation."

Often while the services and the classes were being conducted, a medical camp was being led by the BFLC's doctors Anand Kumar and Florence Nightingale, a husband and wife team who were joined by



Dr. Anand Kumar and his wife, Dr. Florence Nightingale Kumar.

missionary nurse Sonja Dahl. The children were examined and administered medicines and nutritional supplements. After seeing their ministry, Pastor Wagley said, "They are in desperate need of money for medical supplies and my prayer is that we in the AFLC can somehow raise the monthly support for this doctoring couple."

Days were packed with activity and ministry. Usually each evening (continued on next page)

Changes come with growth

As families grow they have to do things a little differently. When it is just Dad and Mom and one child things like meals and trips are generally not too complicated to plan. If it becomes six kids, an equal number of in-laws and numerous grandchildren, arranging meals and get-togethers becomes a much bigger project.

Our AFLC family has grown over the years. We are not simply a group of congregations in the Upper Midwest with a few sister congregations in the Pacific Northwest. We are a national church body, with member congregations throughout the nation. Everyone does not know everyone else at annual conferences, or even at pastors' conferences. The numbers have gotten larger.

The growth of our church body makes it necessary for us at *The Lutheran Ambassador* to do some things a little differently. Twenty

years ago we could put in the names of the new youth group officers in one congregation and the minutes from a district's women's missionary federation rally. We now have a few too many youth groups, WMFs and other such groups to put that kind of information in the magazine anymore. Our mission remains the same, however: to encourage and equip Christians; to evangelize non-Christians; and to educate people about the work of the AFLC's congregations and departments.

Along with our devotional and inspirational articles, we still want to let people know what is going on in the congregations of our AFLC. We are interested in hearing news of what is happening in your congregation. What is a special and unique way God is working in people's lives? Maybe your congregation saw somebody recently come to Christ and there is a testimony to share. Maybe you tried something new in reaching out to your community and you'd like to share with others what you have learned. Maybe God has worked in your Sunday school in a surprising way recently and you'd like to let others know. We would enjoy hearing those kind of stories. And if you don't have any, pray that God will

soon give you one!

We know God is at work. Let us know how He is at work in your life and the life of your congregation.

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AVAILABLE FROM THE PARISH EDUCATION OFFICE

A new video is available from parish education on "The History of the AFLC." This 75 minute video is a presentation given by Loiell Dyrud at Word of Life Free Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota, on "Who We Are and Why We Do Things the Way We Do in the AFLC." The cost is \$15. Contact the AFLC Parish Education office at 612-545-5631 or parished@afcl.org to request a copy.

VBS information and kits are available for order from the Parish Education Office. Check out our Easter bulletin board supplies and videos!

INDIA

the team returned to Chiralla around nine for dinner; often the same menu as breakfast. Paul Haugen admitted, "Many times I was so tired when we got back to the house I would practically fall asleep in my food. It was well worth it, though."

Except for Pastors Enderlein and Wagley, it was the first trip to India for the rest. They returned home on January 22, grateful to the Lord for answered prayer in so many ways. They continue to pray, and ask others to pray, for those in India who have so many needs. One village desperately needs a well. Funds for medicines and a new hospital and perseverance through daily struggles is needed as well. Kevin Groven said, "As I reflect on the way we saw God moving in India, I am reminded of Habakkuk 1:5. 'Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days — You would not believe if you were told.'"



Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (1 months) – January 1 - January 31, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$19,335.02	19,335.02	8
Seminary	110,296.00	9,252.57	9,252.57	8
Bible School	147,674.00	30,996.97	30,996.97	21
Home Missions.	238,152.00	18,104.53	18,104.53	8
World Missions.	190,909.00	12,806.78	12,806.78	7
Capital Investment	14,065.00	565.28	565.28	4
Parish Education	56,854.00	4,239.52	4,239.52	7
Church Extension	21,051.00	2,087.55	2,087.55	10
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	97,388.22	97,388.22	10
TOTALS 1998	1,278,758.00	113,960.38	113,960.38	9

Goal 8%

(The Evangelism Department received \$1346.31 in January 1999.)

People can change

Reunions can give the feeling of being transported back in a time machine. You discover many people are like you remember them. Some of the hair changes color or disappears. Some of the waistlines are wider. Some of the fashion tastes change as well. But often, the things that matter the most don't change a great deal.

People gravitate toward the same companions they had in the past. Those who were leaders are still leading. The shy ones are either by the wall or probably haven't even come. The joke tellers are still trying to get laughs. Personalities have remained pretty much the same.

It doesn't have to always be that way. People can change, and be changed. That would have been evident if Jesus' first disciples had taken part in a reunion with some of their childhood friends.

Imagine if there had been such a thing as "Galilee High School." Ten-year reunion time comes along and some surprising discoveries are made

Peter always spoke first and dealt with the consequences later. But now his words make sense. He speaks with authority and wisdom. And he doesn't sit around telling long-winded fishing stories like he used to. He keeps talking about Jesus. He spent three years with Him, then watched Him die on a cross. But Peter says Jesus rose from the dead, and he talked with Him and walked with Him, and then saw Him go up into the clouds. That is his story and he is sticking to it. He has gone to prison because of it, and he is willing to go again.

Peter's brother Andrew is here. He never was as talkative as Peter and he still isn't. But he is great at one-on-one conversations and he is even friendlier than people remember. It seems before the night is over, in his quiet way, he shares a word of encouragement with everyone in the room. And he discovered some old friends who didn't know Jesus had similar interests to some friends who were believers, so he introduced them and got a new friendship started. I hear he did the same kind of thing with Peter and Jesus.

There's those sons of Zebedee, James and John. It's hard to believe they actually gave up the fishing trade. It was looking like they were going to make it big. And they had that mother who was kind of pushy and wanting to see them be first in everything.

Things have sure changed. Not long into the

evening the game begins of bragging about how much you make and what you own. But John and James aren't joining in. It's pretty clear they would probably lose. They don't have nearly as much as the rest of the group. They are not going to be catching up either. The strange thing is, they don't seem to care. It doesn't bother them that they're the poorest in the group when it comes to how much money is in your pocket. Actually they are even poorer now than when they first came. Soon after they got here they gave some money to a guy who seemed to be in need. They are just a couple of coins above nothing, but they are the happiest guys in the room.

Some people got a little tense when they saw Levi arrive, but it changed quickly when they started talking with him. He says now, after meeting Jesus, his name is Matthew. He had been kind of a loner. He didn't care much about people. He was just into himself and making money. It was a natural he would become a tax collector. But look at him now! He gave up the tax collecting business to follow Jesus. He is still friends with a lot of the guys he used to work with, though. Most of us do all we can to avoid those guys, but Matthew has them over to his home. It causes some of the religious types in town to talk, but Matthew doesn't care. He likes to hang out with them and tell them about Jesus.

Two guys who used to never get along were Matthew and Simon. He was called Simon the zealot. He was always a revolutionary, a real Jewish patriot type, talking about how we ought to overthrow the Roman Empire. Those types viewed tax collectors as the worst kind of traitors. But here they are: Matthew and Simon, getting along as the best of friends. And they say it's all because of Jesus.

Folks often show up at reunions with a change of hairstyle, income status, occupation, where they live and other things — but carrying around the same emptiness and hopelessness in their lives. Jesus can change that. He can make a difference in the areas that matter the most. The first believers are evidence of that. They became changed people by believing in the unchangeable and risen Savior and His unchangeable love.

Have a wonderful Easter celebrating the unchangeable, unshakable truth that Jesus is risen again!

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

"Imagine if there had been such a thing as 'Galilee High School.'"

BUILDING THE BASE

God sets us free

Exodus 2:23 says, "And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God." This physical bondage exemplifies the reality of our spiritual bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot set ourselves free. They were as dead men; they could in no way free themselves from Egyptian bondage.

The law of God often presents man in his depravity as a dead man, unable in any way to make himself alive. With Paul in Romans 7:24, we must say, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" How does God's Word answer this fundamental question?

In Exodus 14, the Israelites are leaving Egypt when Pharaoh pins them against the Red Sea. The Israelites cry out to the Lord, and then ask Moses why he brought them there to die? In Exodus 14:13-14 it says, "But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you

while you keep silent.'"

This passage beautifully shows God as active and the Israelites as inactive. God works salvation for them, while they keep silent. This physical deliverance shows us a marvelous picture of how God works spiritual deliverance for man. In Ephesians 2 it talks about our deadness and then in verses 4-5 it says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." If we focus on the subject and verb, it says, "But God made us alive." Here again, God is the one doing the work.

Where does God's grace do this work? In Romans 1:16 Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The word "power" in that verse means "the gracious power of God." In the gospel then we see the gracious power of God.

What is the gospel? It is the good news that Jesus Christ shed His blood for our sins when He died on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous. It is at the cross where Jesus did the work for our salva-

tion; and when God works, the work is completely done. What is our guarantee then that the blood of Christ was sufficient to free us from sin and death? It's the resurrection of Jesus that we celebrate at Easter!

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are especially significant for young people today because we live in a pluralistic society in which many beliefs are presented as being valid ways to be set free from sin and death. Yet Scripture clearly teaches it is only by faith in what Jesus has done that anyone is set free.

It is also significant that God through Christ has saved us. So often today we hear that faith is something we do, yet Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." The faith by which we are saved is the work of the Word and Spirit of God in our hearts. Faith is not something I can produce on my own. God delivers me through faith in His finished work, just as He delivered the Israelites, while they stood by and were silent.

— Jon Dryburgh
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota