

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

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We
live
because
HE
LIVES

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Jesus, the resurrection and the life

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26

These words of Jesus were originally spoken to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, at a very important time for her. She and Mary were grieving over the death of their brother and Jesus' words were vital to any comfort and hope that they might experience. We, too, often associate these words of Christ with comfort and hope particularly at the loss of a loved one. These verses are often read at funeral services. How we praise God for the comfort we can derive from them!

This claim of Jesus to be the "resurrection and the life" is central to the Christian faith. We acknowledge this vital truth in the Apostle's Creed as we confess that Jesus on "the third day ... rose again from the dead" and that Christians have the hope of "the resurrection of the body." Such hope is the focus of the Easter season. Such hope is central to the Christian faith! May that hope be precious to us today and each day as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

This precious hope, however, is often distorted in our day. Quite often at funeral services and in conversations regarding the death of an individual, resurrection and life are spoken of as the norm and death and hell are thought of as the unreality. It seems as though many believe that everyone is going to end up in heaven!

On the authority of the Word

of God I can say to you that, in contrast to this popular opinion, death and hell are the norm — they are the reality. We all come into this world under the sentence of death and condemnation and unless something changes, that is the reality all must face!

Praise be to God; Jesus has changed it.

He became a man "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus bore our death and hell and rose victorious over all. Thus He is the resurrection and the life. Not the church; not a Christian heritage, not our efforts to be good — but Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Thus, the crucial question the Lord presented to Martha and which He presents to you and me is "Do you believe this?" Do you believe that death and hell are the reality which you deserve? Do you believe that Jesus bore God's fierce wrath fully and then rose again victorious over this just condemnation of sin and gives Himself and His resurrection and life to all who will receive Him by faith?

If you believe this, dear friend, you have a hope and peace that none can take away. For you heaven is the norm; it is the reality because your Jesus is the resurrection and the life!

— Rev. Les Johnson
Faith Lutheran
Lake Alma, Saskatchewan



Alive forevermore

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!

— Revelation 1:17-18

Easter Sunday records for us the greatest event in the history of mankind. No other single event is of such importance or has such far-reaching consequences as this. It is the crowning event of redemptive history. The Apostle Paul reminds us that the resurrection of Christ makes Christianity unique. No other religion offers an ever-living founder.

All of the Gospels tell us that Christ is risen from the dead. The book of Romans tells us that belief in the Resurrection is necessary for faith and for eternal life. Paul emphatically tells us that we must publicly confess our faith in a resurrected Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Belief in the resurrection of Christ is not optional in the light of eternity.

Christ's resurrection is substantiated by competent evidence, from the changed lives of the apostles, the transformation

of a persecuting Saul to a persecuted Paul, and the energizing force which spread the gospel. And this gospel still changes lives. This gospel of the resurrected Christ proves to all that Christ was not only the Son of God but also God the Son. No ordinary human being has conquered death, but God stepped into history in the God/Man Jesus Christ to pay the price for our salvation and to prove it by resurrection power. Since He is God we must heed His Words and accept Him into our hearts and lives.

When God stepped into history by coming to earth He did so to reconcile us to Himself. We were the enemies of God that needed salvation. Isaiah told us that our sins had separated us from God and the only way back to God was by God's initiative and invitation. Christ came to pay the ransom price for our sins and He became the atoning sacrifice that was carried out on Calvary's cross. When Christ cried out, "It is finished!," He was telling us that redemption is complete, atonement has been made, your sins and mine have been paid for, and today you and I can be a part of God's family by faith in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

The Resurrection also gives us proof that death and the grave do not end all. There is life after death. Death has always brought sorrow and heartache to the human race. The Bible describes it as the last enemy that comes to us, but the Resurrection emphasizes that death is a defeated enemy for the child of God. Scripture teaches us that a child of God can be confident even in the face of that last enemy because the Bible says, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Because He lives we too shall live!

This truth also speaks to the unbeliever. We can now evade Him, deny Him,
(continued on next page)



— Rev. Roy Warwick
Our Saviour's and Drummond Parish
Mason, Wisconsin



*I am the
resurrection
and the life;
he who believes
in me,
though he die,
yet shall
he live.*

— John 11:25

Power

We live in a nation that values exercise. Daily we are bombarded with ads for Thigh Masters, Gut Busters, Cardio Glides, and Nordic Traks to help us burn fat and calories. Doctors tell us to jog or do aerobics to raise our metabolisms and make us more physically fit. In Romans 6:4b, Paul tells us about an exercise that Christians should do to stay spiritually fit — *power walking* or *walking in newness of life*: an exercise made possible by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul teaches in Romans 6 that the Resurrection is not something just to be observed at Easter. It is something believers should participate in every day. We participate in the resurrection of Jesus by power walking — living our lives each day for Christ by the power that is *at work* in us (Ephesians 3:20). That same power raised Christ from the dead. Are you power walking?

In spite of the emphasis on exercising in the United States, 58 million adults in

ALIVE

neglect Him, reject Him. But the Bible tells us that there will be a day “when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). Then it will be too late for salvation and the “wrath of God shall abide on him” (John 3:36).

We must repent now and let Jesus wash away our sins and make us His dwelling place. Jesus is alive forevermore, and wanting to live in our lives.

Making the Resurrection Personal

Not only do we have substantial fact for the resurrection but we can experience it in our own lives by the indwelling presence of the resurrected Christ. This is the unique character of Christianity — not only an ever-living founder but the God of resurrection power comes to live in every one who

puts their faith and trust in Him.

May you and I have the assurance in our lives that our sins are forgiven by the blood of Christ, shed for us on the cross. May we also be assured that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ guarantees to every believer the power of the indwelling Christ for a victorious and holy life that brings glory and praise to Him also.

In Philippians 1:21, Paul emphasizes that Christianity is not profession but possession, “For to me to live is Christ.” He adds in Galatians 2:20, “Christ liveth in me.” Have you experienced this new life in Christ? Do you know what it is to walk with the living Christ in open fellowship? If not, come to Him now.

Remember, there is a world of difference if I say only “He is risen” and do not affirm that “He is risen for me.” Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father that He might be our daily companion and ever-present Lord.



walking

this country are still overweight and teens are more out of shape than teenagers of 30 years ago. Why? America is becoming a nation of couch potatoes. We don't wear sweat suits to exercise in; we wear them to be comfortable. Our lives may be hectic, but they are not active. Running to the store or surfing the Internet does not burn many calories. Americans are not exercising.

Sadly, the same is true for Christians; we are not power walking. More Christian teens watch MTV than teens who do not claim the name of Christ (AFA Journal, 1/96). Only 34 percent of U.S. citizens who claim to be Christians worship God at least once a week (Barna Research Group). Personal evangelism for too many evangelicals consists of putting a bumper sticker on the family car. Are we power walking?

Power walking means living differently than the world does — that you “walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind” (Ephesians 4:17). Walking *in newness of life* means having a new attitude, new standard, and a new source of power for living, not Ginsana or Power-Ade or a Jenny Craig weight-loss plan, but “his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:19).

Power walking means you have the power to overcome the fear of witnessing to the new couple who just moved in next door. It means you can walk as a “child of light” (Ephesians 5:8), and can say no to your friend when he offers you marijuana. It means that the comments you hear at school about Christians being wimps don't bother you. You're not a loser; you've been raised with Christ. You're power walking “not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (Romans 8:1).

Power walking means not cheating on your taxes like everyone else at work does. Rather you report all cash income because you've been raised to newness of life and have the strength to “walk honestly, as in the day” (Romans 13:17).

Every day, each of us takes about 8,000 steps. How much of that walking is done



*As Christ was raised
from the dead by the
glory of the Father,
we too might walk in
newness of life.*

— Romans 6:4b

in newness of life, in resurrection power? This year don't celebrate Easter merely by attending a sunrise service and the youth group breakfast afterwards. Don't just celebrate Easter with a family dinner or by watching Charlton Heston in “The Ten Commandments” for the 23rd time. Celebrate Easter this year by starting an exercise program — power walking. Let's do it and be raised to new life with our risen Lord!



— Rev. Kevin Garner
Fox River Lutheran
Norway, Illinois

The author graduated with a M. Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois in 1993. He was placed on the AFLC Clergy Roster in 1995. His wife Susan is currently a student at the George Williams School of Social Work at Aurora University, Aurora, Illinois, where she is pursuing a career in counseling.

That first Easter morning was a time of great testing for the women who went to Jesus' tomb. Only days before they had sat at His feet and experienced heaven in their souls. Now they were a sad little group on their way to His grave to anoint His body and bury their hope. The

Some through the fire

angel's words changed their heaviness to amazement: "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said."

— Matthew 28:6

Perhaps you have found yourself in sorrow and distress, tried and tested beyond all that seems sensible or fair. Then consider God's Word from I Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The women saw an angel and heard the glorious announcement of His resurrection, but you have had no heavenly vision. From where does your "living hope" come?

The Promise of Living Hope

Especially during times of trial your hope may seem anything but living. Perhaps you have been a Christian for some time and there has been fruit in your life. You discipline yourself in your devotional and public life and are recognized by many as a Christian. But now, since trouble has come, your devotional life seems, at times, an exercise in futility and your service to God is often burdensome. You have tried everything from "getting away" for a while to chiding yourself for your faithless heart. But you remain burdened and the weariness only grows. Do you realize that you have been looking to yourself for strength? The burden only increases by doing that.

The Lord has a better way for you. He

has given you His Word through which Jesus comes to you. Let Him speak to you as He wills through His Word.

Let Him fill your discouraged heart and mind with the gospel of grace. You have chastised yourself for your lack of faith until you dare not claim all the promises He has given you, yet it is precisely these promises that He will use to strengthen your faith.

You can trust the Holy Spirit to use God's law to convict you of your sin. He will do this perfectly as only God can do. Trust Him also to apply the promises of the gospel to your soul. These have been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus. You cannot make yourself worthy of them for they are your's through faith in Jesus. Simply fall to your knees and praise Him for His goodness and grace.

The Presence of the Living Savior

Jesus comes to you through the Word of God. Spend whatever time is necessary in His Word until you experience a heart-to-heart meeting with Him. Seek the counsel of another if you need it but always remember, true rest and strength for your soul comes only in the gospel of grace.

Jesus also comes to you through the Lord's Supper. "From Christ's words, 'For the remission of sins you should ... believe that Jesus Christ bestows upon you His holy body and blood to strengthen your assurance that your sins are forgiven' (exhortation before communion). Dr. Billy Graham recently quoted Mark Twain as saying the two most important words in the English language are "not guilty." To a soul burdened by trials and beset by temptation, the assurance of the forgiveness of sin and full acceptance as a child of God are offered at the Lord's Table. He will meet you there and strengthen you.

Jesus makes His presence known in the Church as well. While undergoing recent trials beyond description, the Lord moved various people to phone me, write me or visit me. These precious sisters and brothers were messengers of God who recognized my terrible burden and declared the gospel of grace to me. Others did so without ever saying a word. Kind understanding and prayer surrounded me and Jesus



— Rev. Dale Mellgren
Mt. Carmel and Trinity Parish
McIntosh, Minnesota

We live forever because He lives

As little children, time seems to drag on and the idea of eternal life may not be that hard to fathom. As we grow older, however, our perception of life changes. Each year seems to be shorter than the year before. Then quickly, most of our life is behind us rather than before us. Perhaps that is why elderly people may tend to focus on the concept of eternal life more than younger people.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that any of us will reach that time in our lives. This fact is all too real for both my husband, Dave, and I who have each lost a sibling. My brother, Brad (AFLBS '78), was only 25 and just beginning a career as an audio technician when he lost his life in a drowning. Dave's sister, Judy, lost her life tragically at 35, leaving behind a three-and-a-half-year-old daughter. Life is unfair. Similar things have happened to many others. How can one cope?

I will never forget the night my family sat around our dining room table and learned of Brad's death. No one can possibly prepare for a moment such as that. Yet, in that moment of need, God's presence and grace was felt stronger than ever before. My first thought was one of peace; God was in control. My second thought was, quite frankly, "I want to sing at the funeral."

I knew this was a strength above and beyond my own. Although, the circumstances surrounding Judy's death were totally different, the peace of God was definitely there. How could we have such peace in the midst of such tragedy? The answer is simple: God's promise of eternal life through Christ. Jesus conquered death as He rose again the first Easter morning and, because He lives, we can live forever. We know that both Brad and Judy knew Christ as their Savior. It was not a matter of saying "goodbye," only "see you later."

Where would Dave and I be without the hope of eternal life in Christ? We would probably be a grieving brother or sister, unable to let go of the weight of anger and bitterness. Instead, we can have freedom, peace and a hope of life far better

than anything we can know here on earth.

I wrote the following lyrics a few years after Brad's death and sang them at Judy's funeral. They convey my thoughts better than any other words.

HIGHER GROUND

by Yvonne Blake

© 1995

When all the waiting is done,
and I am welcomed home
After I have seen the Lord, it's you I'll look for
And no, I don't know the first thing, I will say
But I know that I cannot wait til that day
When we'll be together, just like before
There in the presence of the Lord
We'll be together again, on ...

(Chorus) Higher ground, higher ground
Higher ground, higher ground
We'll be together again on higher ground

What is it like, where tears never fall
Where darkness never comes at all
So much beauty fills the eye,
it cannot be described
Where time has no place, no beginning or end
And there is no ocean of fears to drown in
Where we'll be together, just like before
There in the presence of the Lord
We'll be together again, on ...

(Repeat Chorus)

(Instrumental)

Higher ground, higher ground
Higher ground, higher ground
We'll be together just like before
There in the presence of the Lord
We'll be together again, on higher ground.

— Yvonne (Haugen) Blake
Ontonagon, Michigan


The author and her husband are 1984 and '83 graduates of AFLBS. They travel to churches sharing their testimony in word and song.

came to me in the midst of it all and strengthened me. My faith was resurrected when all had seemed hopeless and dead. If you are in the midst of trial, let your sisters and brothers in Christ love you as best they know how. You will discover Jesus anew in the communion of saints.

When the women went to Jesus' tomb,

they expected to find His body. Instead they discovered the empty tomb. The Savior is alive!

*He lives to silence all my fears,
He lives to wipe away my tears,
He lives to calm my troubled heart,
He lives all blessings to impart.*

— Samuel Medley 

God's angels: messengers of Truth

We read of them in news magazines. We watch them on evening television programs. Even on my aunt's Christmas wish list this year was "a book about angels." People are fascinated by them and the interest is growing. The problem is that interest is not always accompanied by understanding. You've probably heard well-meaning people try to comfort a grieving family by telling them their loved one has now become an angel.

The Source of Truth

Those who love God's Word know that there is no greater comfort than His Truth. We believe that Truth and understanding come from God and that they are revealed to us through His Word.

While browsing through bookstores to look for books on angels, it became glaringly apparent to me that much, in fact, most of the material being written about angels does not draw upon God's Word as its source. With sources other than the Bible feeding the voracious appetite of our society's "angelmania," there is real reason for concern. Without understanding or discernment, people are being led and encouraged to call upon and reach



— Rev. Tom Gilman
Redeemer Lutheran
Canton,
South Dakota

RNS Photo



out and open up to these "beings of light," not realizing what *beings* they are inviting into their lives.

The Purpose of Angels

God's Word tells us that there are indeed angels who are appointed to watch over us and guard us (Psalm 91). His Word also warns us that Satan commands evil angels, and that Satan even disguises himself as "an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14).

A truth that Scripture makes very clear is that angels of God never seek to draw people to themselves. Rather, they are always pointing us to Jesus. When the apostle John was overcome with the glory of his vision in Revelation 19, he fell at the feet of the angel before him to worship him. But the angel said to him, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God." Hebrews 1:14 says of God's angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

So the Bible is very clear concerning the angels of God: We are never to worship or call upon them, nor are they free to come into our lives at their own discretion and for their own purposes. They are always sent by God and always bear His message.

The Example of Jesus

We see these roles lived out in the last hours of Jesus's earthly life, both by Jesus Himself and by God's angels. While in Gethsemane, Jesus was greatly in need of strength to face what lay before Him. The Bible tells us that "an angel appeared to Him, strengthening Him" (Luke 22:43). But notice that it wasn't an angel to whom Jesus cried out, but to His Father in heaven. It was not even an angel that Jesus asked for, but the Father saw fit to send an angel to minister to His Son.

A short time later, at the hour of Jesus' arrest, Peter had drawn his sword and cut off a man's ear. After telling him to put his sword away, Jesus said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" Again, there was no thought of an appeal to any angels, but only to His Father.

After being strengthened by the angel, Jesus was led away into Jerusalem to do

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

Preach the Word

Paul wrote these words to the young pastor Timothy, "Preach the Word: be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (II Timothy 4:2).

Our catechism reminds us that this is our petition whenever we pray "Hallowed by Thy Name," for it is answered "when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as God's children lead holy lives in accordance with it."

The same concern was present at the organization of the AFLC in 1962. Our Declaration of Faith declares, "The preaching of the Word of God must be the central part of the service."

It would be wonderful if one could affirm that the preaching of the Word is a distinguishing mark of the AFLC congregations. God grant that it is! Yet we must be aware of subtle dangers that might divert us from this goal.

Some may preach about the Word instead of preaching the Word itself. This is the problem with so-called topical sermons, which can too easily string a series of Bible verses together in support of the pastor's points without ever getting into the Word itself. We used to warn in homiletics class of "airport texts," which provide the speaker with a place to take off in flight, as it were, and not to return there until the flight was over. Flights of eloquence, however, will not feed the flock with lasting nourishment.

Others may preach issues, responding at times to the concern that our messages would be more relevant or practical. These sermons are usually topical, too, but they sometimes lack even the excuse of a text, as the speakers seek to address the issues of our day from a Christian perspective.

It is important to note that both of the examples above may include those who hold a high view of Holy Scripture, committed to the inerrancy of God's Word, yet who sometimes are tempted to provide their congregations with little more than the thin soup of flashiness and fads.

A famous preacher once wrote that if a pastor takes a text and tries to explain it to his people as clearly and plainly as possible, he will soon gain a reputation for great originality. May the Lord help our pastors to be true men of the Word, proclaiming as well as professing the whole counsel of God, both law and gospel, without fear or favor, unto the salvation of lost souls and the strengthening of the Body of Christ.



— Rev. Robert L. Lee
AFLC President

what no one else could ever do — to face death and conquer it for all eternity. And on that first Easter morning, that morning of victory for Jesus and for all who come to know Him, it was angels who were the first to proclaim the news: "He is not here; He is risen, just as He said" (Matthew 28:6).

Servants of God, pointing to Jesus — these are God's angels. Yes they're real. Yes, they're around us to minister to all who will inherit salvation. But our pur-

pose is not to seek them; rather it is to seek the Lord. Any other spirit of any other purpose is not sent of God. Don't be misled by all the information floating around. Consider the source and stick to the Truth of God's Word. Keep your eyes fixed on Him who stands victoriously on the other side of death and who said, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches" (Revelation 22:16).



Easter and theatre?

It may seem odd to put these two words together. For some people, theatre may not seem to have a place in the church, but for those who have seen these two elements together, they have seen the hand of God at work.

I was fifteen the first time I was involved in an Easter drama. My local church presented a one-hour drama in which I had a role. It was a real eye-opening experience to see how people reacted to the play. The following year our church presented an Easter pageant. This combined drama and choir to present the last week of Christ's life. I was a Roman soldier that year. The following year I played the role of Christ. Through my friendship with the minister, who put the pageant

that used when the centurion flogged Christ. Christ was stretched with four ropes tied to His hands and feet and pulled by four soldiers. While being flogged, Jesus, the soldiers and the centurion all turned 360 degrees. Add to this the choir counting out the strokes, one ... two ... three ..., special lighting, a timpani drum beat and you create a impact. Thankfully, we found that when the whip came across the back a certain way, it made a loud noise but was not too painful. It was only when the centurion slipped that it became very painful. (This was more interesting the years my own brother was the centurion.)

Another educational part of the pageant for me was the Crucifixion. Jesus was flogged 39 times



together, I have since played the role of Christ over a dozen times at three different churches.

I cannot describe the impact of this presentation on the lives of those who saw it, as well as those who participated. Words do not express what it is like to investigate what really happened to Christ after He was arrested, beaten before the High Priest, beaten and mocked by the Roman soldiers and then flogged.

In our production, we used a leather cat-o'-nine-tails similar to

(often men died from that alone), then was forced to carry the cross before being nailed to it. Thankfully I was not nailed to the cross, but I was raised up on a cross while we re-enacted Christ's seven last statements as well as a couple of choir songs. This whole time period lasted about 25 minutes. That may not have seemed long to the audience, but I learned what it is like having leg and arm cramps while up there.

The important aspect of the Easter pageant and others like it

is that believers and non-believers alike get a glimpse of what Easter is actually about and what really did happen to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christmas and Easter are our biggest events in each new church year. Probably the greatest number of people are in our churches during those days. Using drama as an evangelism tool for non-Christians, and as an educational and motivational tool for Christians, cannot be underestimated.

There are those who may think that the local church should not have anything to do with theatre, and that today there are just too many negatives being associated with theatre or art in whatever form it takes. I respond to that by pointing to history and seeing the connections between the theatre and the church. Throughout the centuries, the church has used theatre as an evangelistic and educational tool. For example, in the Middle Ages when the church conducted all services in Latin, which the public did not understand, theatre was used to teach the Old Testament stories and the New Testament gospel message. We can learn from historical examples.

Many churches may think they are not large enough to handle a theatre production. But remember, theatre may be complex or simple. Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago has thousands of members. They have done large productions and simple skits as a part of their worship service. They also publish much of their material if one is searching for ideas.

Last Easter, our small church choir combined with four other local churches to present a musical Easter cantata. A certain amount of drama was suggested by the cantata as optional. We added a small amount, not too complex. When added to a wonderful and powerful musical choir presentation, it set our little com-



"Make Music to our God"

Psalms 147:7

This is the cover of our new FLY songbook designed by Eddie Britz. Please pray for this project due to be completed and ready to sell at the annual conference in Warm Beach, Washington. Pastor Tim Carlson is the project leader.

munity abuzzing. Two presentations became standing room only! But more importantly, lives were touched. Not only was the message evangelistic, but it encouraged the hearts of each Christian who saw or participated in it.

Theatre can reach the soul and emotions of a person like no other medium I know. Live theatre especially draws people right into the story, as if they themselves are involved in the action itself. If you are not now using theatre as a part of your evangelistic or education outreach, think about giving it a try. Anyone can do it. It just takes someone to get the ball rolling.



— Patrick J. Voelker
Cokato, Minnesota

The author is the choir director at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cokato. They are again presenting a cantata for the community this Easter.

Youth Notes

The highest calling

The voice on the other end of the phone quivered when she spoke. It had been a hard day, and she needed to know if anyone really cared. Her youth leader listened for a long time without saying much, except, "I care, and Jesus cares."

The speaker had talked about God's love and how our sins separate us from that love. He had never experienced that love before because his family was full of constant anger. As he talked with the counselor he confessed his sin and cried as he received God's forgiveness and love.

It was a weekend retreat at about 1:00 a.m. and time to go to bed, but the three girls had a lot of questions. "Who wrote the Bible? How do you know it's true? Where did God come from?" Then the real question finally came out, "How can you know for sure that you are going to heaven?" By 2:00 a.m. the angels in heaven were rejoicing over the three new members of the kingdom of heaven.

Youth ministry is a high calling. In Matthew 18, when the disciples asked, "Who is the

greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus responded by placing a child in their midst. Youth ministry is a high calling because Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Working with youth is the best instruction you can get to become "like little children" in faith.

Youth ministry is a high calling because Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." There just isn't any better training in humility than working with youth. When you think you might be somebody or know something, they will quickly show you otherwise. When you feel quite worthless they will be your source of encouragement.

Youth ministry is a high calling because Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." When you serve youth you are serving Jesus himself! Now that is a high calling!

— by Pastor Kevin Olson.

AFLC Youth Ministries Director

Mission trips

Russia — a group is going to work with an English language camp. Leaving about May 20, 1996. (Full)

Mexico — work in Augas-cientes. Length is two weeks; leaving August 5, 1996. (Space available)

Get more information from the AFLC Youth Office:

3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd.

Minneapolis, MN 55441

Phone (612) 545-5631

— SEND A NOTE —

Tell us why your youth leader is the best! (Tell your leader as well).

Prayer Requests

❶ That people would catch God's vision for youth ministry in their community.

❷ That the youth leaders would find encouragement in the up and down cycles of their ministry.

❸ That youth groups would grow in their atmosphere of love and acceptance.

❹ For the upcoming youth events and open hearts to receive what the Lord has to say to them.

The 30th Annual Conference in Brazil

The theme for this year was "O Lord revive they work," from Habakkuk 3:2b. The conference was held on the Bible school campus in Campo Mourão, Parana. There were bus loads of delegates brought in from the furthest cities of our mission. The spirit and fellowship was warm.

The AFLC Brazil President, Rev. Oseias Camara, spoke on the importance for a church not to fall for man-made ideas of church revivals. Field Conference president, Rev. Connely J. Dyrud spoke on the key to church revival according to II Chronicles 7:14. Rev. David Nelson, the newest missionary to Brazil, preached on Sunday morning on the need for unity in the church in order for the Lord to send a revival.

On the Sunday of conference, the new AFLC Central Church in downtown Campo Mourão was dedicated in a touching service. All conference delegates met in the old Central Church building. Several shared past experiences before leaving it and entering the new building. President Camara conducted the dedication ceremony.



(Row 2) Missionary David Nelson, Evangelist Pastor Benvindo, and Missionary Paul Abel. (Front) Missionary Connely Dyrud and Rev. Oseias Camara, President AFLC Brazil.

ducted the dedication ceremony.

The original Central Church building is a significant one in the AFLC mission work in Brazil. The first AFLC missionaries to Brazil, Rev. John and Ruby Abel, built it with the intention that it be a Bible school. It was used as a Christian Day School and a church. As time went on more

buildings were added on. The Bible school moved out of town on the acreage still in use and the campus has room for expansion.

As the years went by, both the church and the day school grew. Five years ago the church council had to decide: shall we build a new school on our corner lot or a new church? There was no doubt in every one's mind that the church is the primary function of our existence so a new church was built and the old structure returned to its original plan of being a school.

The inflation in Brazil was over 1,000% a year at that time, so no loans were taken out to build the new church. It was done by tithes, offerings, promotions and a lot of perseverance and sacrifice. Not one dollar was received from the U.S. It is a totally Brazilian AFLC church.

The old church facility has been added to the Christian day school and has been turned over to the Bible school and seminary



The last minutes in the old Central Church was a time for remembering the many blessed years in the building.



The new Central Church.



Conference evening services at Central Church.

to administer and use to train students. We do thank the Lord for His guiding and leading in all ways.

The exciting discussion at the conference focused on the possibility of the national church in Brazil looking to new areas white unto harvest. Some of our AFLC

people have moved to the capital of the new state of Mato Grosso do Sul. They have pleaded for spiritual help for two years now. We thank the Lord that the Brazilian church council has asked the U.S. World Mission Committee to send missionary Jonathan Abel to the capital city of Campo Grande to

start a new work with national team ministries. This is an exciting new area of work for the Brazilian church. Please pray for this new work and the Jonathan Abels who are returning to the field in March.

— Missionary Connely J. Dyrud
Campo Mourão, Brazil

World Mission update

* **The Brazilian church** has now approved another new work to begin in Presidente Prudente, a city midway between Campo Mourão and Campo Grande. This ministry will be led by a national pastor and will begin simultaneously with the work led by Missionary Jonathan Abel in the city of Campo Grande.

* **The Jonathan Abel family** was scheduled to leave Minnesota for Melbourne, Florida on March 7, 1996, where they would spend several days with their family, retired missionaries John and Ruby Abel. Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and family were to join them upon their arrival from Brazil on their way to Minneapolis for their year of furlough.

* **Deputation work continues** for missionary candidate Sonja Dahl. Her visa application has been accepted by the Consulate in Chicago and is now in Brazil waiting approval. Prayer cards for Sonja are now available.

For your deputation request call her at 507-453-0889 or the World Missions office at 612-545-6472.

World Missions secretary, Karen Anderson is already taking deputation requests for Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel. They hope to be available beginning April 1, 1996. As of this writing, the World Missions Committee is considering the purchase of a mission house in the Minneapolis area to be used by missionaries on furlough.

* **In Mexico**, Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles have moved to a different home and have a place ready for Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk and family when they arrive in Aguascalientes. The Schierkolks are enroute to their first mission assignment. Pray for their health and strength as they make these initial adjustments.

* **In Curitiba, Brazil**, the David Nelson family is beginning their first mission assignment after completing a year of language study. They are living at the ARCA and carrying on the

ministry for Missionary Paul Abel during his year of furlough.

* **Partners in Mission Outreach** is planning a new project and expects to drive their bus into central Mexico and the cities of Leon and Aguascalientes. Plans are to depart from the Midwest the first part of August 1996, and drive to the AFLC's Southern District Bible Camp in Oklahoma. There they will join with Missionary Dan Giles and he will escort the bus into Mexico. People of all ages are encouraged to experience this ministry opportunity. Contact Al Brazier at 218-782-2456 for more information.

* **Catch the vision for India** and see a 20-minute video on the mission work in that nation. Pastor Enderlein along with D. Luther Sastry, an Indian pastor and AFLTS student, are visiting congregations in the Midwest this spring during weekend trips. Call the office at 612-545-6472 for more information.

An open door

The year was 1973. President Nixon was under siege as Congress and the media inquired about his role in the Watergate break-in. Public confidence in institutions, i.e. government, the church and the military was failing. I had just lost the one material possession which mattered most to me, a leather motorcycle jacket. I was coming to the realization that even the material things which could bring me a measure of happiness would only in the end be broken, stolen or wear out.

It was at that time that my next door neighbor in the enlisted men's barracks invited me to a Bible study in Pensacola, Florida, about a 30 mile drive. Since he had been kind enough to help me keep my rusty Austin automobile running, I went along.



— Rev. Brian Davidson
St. Peter Lutheran
Metz, Michigan

Looking back at the events which followed that invitation, I can see from that perspective that I became a part of a larger event — an event which I would now describe as a “revival.”

At the moment, all I thought about on the drive to Pensacola, was what I would say if anyone inquired about my lack of spirituality. That fear was unfounded. We arrived at a very small apartment filled with about 30 young adults. They welcomed me and found a corner of the floor for me to sit.

I was impressed that these people were committed to live their lives by the Bible. Growing up in an atmosphere of indifference toward the biblical message had not prepared me for the intensity of these young men and women as they shared how they were applying biblical principles to their work and personal relationships. I realized too, that these were Christians who believed in the power of prayer. This was a little troubling since I realized that one of the objects of those prayers was now this new visitor to their group.

One of the former leaders of that Bible study estimates that 15 people became Christians through that group and another 20 or so deepened their commitment to Christ. This response was not restricted to the Pensacola area. While in technical school in Norfolk, Virginia, I found a dynamic and growing group of Christians meeting weekly for Bible study and prayer. They also ventured into the barracks to share their faith with other sailors. I came into contact in the next few years with Christian men and women from Charleston Navy Base, Shaw AFB, McDill AFB, Fort Sumter, Pope AFB, Eglin AFB and Fort Bragg.

While the word “revival” was

often heard in the Bible studies I attended, it usually referred to events in the past and not to the present events which seemed to be "normal" to me by that time. No one thought that anything extraordinary was happening. We weren't seeing any "miracles" of healing or "signs" of power. People were simply coming to faith in Christ through the persistent witness of their friends and co-workers.

Although it can be a dangerous thing to analyze such events too carefully, I have come to some conclusions about this time of awakening.

① True revival is not an event that one can plan. For some of us, coming to faith in Christ was the culmination of many years of faithful witnessing and prayer by church workers, pastors, or family. Why we "happened" to come to faith at roughly the same time and in the same circumstances is something I will not be able to understand on this side of heaven.

② True revival is not something that, once started, you can incorporate into the present church structure. For any number of reasons we, as new Christians, were unable to bring what we were doing intact into the institutional Church. Most churches wanted us to be in their programs, being taught their particular doctrine. About the only accommodation we could hope for was the provision of space by a church for our meetings and Bible studies. The thought of bringing denominational distinctive into our meetings was anathema to us at that time; so we usually kept to ourselves.

③ True revival has a time limit. I saw this within a few months of attending that first Bible study. The three leaders of the group looked at what was being accomplished at the moment and decided to close the study and set up discipleship groups in its stead. Later, I saw the same thing happen to a radio ministry, the "Scott Ross Show" (an immensely popular program among teens on the East Coast), which consolidated its ministry of outreach and began to emphasize the ministry of teaching.

The majority of those reached during those years began to be incorporated into local congregations at college or at home. Along with that process they began to study the doctrines of their particular denomination, a study they had avoided just a short time before. While they tended to ask more critical questions than those who might have been raised within the church, they grappled with the issues and often became vocal advocates of their church's doctrines.

This process was repeated many times among my friends as I watched people who had not been in a church for many years come to Christ, then become committed disciples, and then become active members of local congregations. Many of them, including myself, long at times for the sense of newness and excitement of those days. Some still live as though those days never ended. In fact, when that first Bible study was disbanded, a few members tried to continue it in its original format. This effort never resulted in any significant outreach and its proponents were slower in becoming incorporated into the local congregation.

Those days of "revival" are over for me. I miss them. I miss the dozens of men and women who were a part of that great movement. I wish that I could go back at times, especially when I've had a lengthy and difficult conversation on the phone with an individual discussing some minor doctrine which has now become the major focus of his life. I long for the days when all I knew about Christianity was what I read in my Bible. But the "open door" which brought about the conversion of dozens of my acquaintances has now been closed in order to open a different door: the door of discipleship.

I am reminded of what was said years ago at a Bible study on Luke 9:62. "Jesus replied, 'No one who put his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'" While the immediate meaning is probably that no one can go back to his old life and continue in the Christian faith, it was noted that an emphasis on yesterday's accomplishments is antithetical to a healthy Christian walk. While all that has happened in years past has been used by God to form me into what I am today, his purposes for me will be best accomplished by looking ahead to whatever He has prepared for me in the days to come.

*See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not
perceive it?
I am making a way in the
desert and streams in the
wasteland.*

— Isaiah 43:19



A tribute to Dean Greven

On April 1, 1996, the longest term of an Association Free Lutheran Bible School dean ends. Rev. Donald Greven began his years at the Medicine Lake campus in 1984 when he joined the faculty and served as acting dean until he was elected dean in 1985 by the annual conference. His predecessors, Rev. Kenneth Moland had served for eight years and Rev. Richard Snipstead for seven. Rev. John Strand was the Bible school dean for one year when it began in 1967.

In reflecting over the past twelve years, Pastor Greven's co-worker and dean of the seminary, Dr. Francis Monseth said, "I think one of his outstanding characteristics was his deep concern for each student. He sincerely desired that each young person personally know Jesus as Savior and then grow in obedience to God's will for his or her life."

Pastor Greven and his wife, Mary, were a team. Together they traveled with the spring choir tours. They worked together and opened their home on campus to numerous students over the years. One student had stayed at the Greven home during a break and left a white shirt in the guest room. After being reminded that he needed to pick it up, Mary brought the shirt up to the student, freshly washed and ironed.

Pastor Greven emphasized the ministry of gospel teams and summer ministry teams. "He worked hard," commented Rev. Lyndon Korhonen, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. "I'm thankful for the years Pastor Greven went the added mile serving as dean and choir director. His generous giving of extra time is a reflection of his love for our schools. Certainly the hours that



Mary gave too, reflect their team ministry."

Jon Bylkas, a '92 AFLBS graduate and now a part-time seminarian, will never forget the first time he walked on campus. "The first person I met was Pastor Greven. He got me going and directed me to a job. I really respected him. Then I got to be good friends with their sons, Matt and John, and was a frequent

guest in their home."

Students knew Pastor Greven was genuinely concerned about them. Mr. Bylkas added: "I was always impressed how he cared for each of us and whether or not we had a living relationship with Christ. That was a new concept to me as I did not come from that background. Also I saw the Greven family in their home. I heard Pastor Greven challenging their own sons, 'Are you letting the Lord guide you?' And then one New Years, they encouraged one another to memorize Scriptures more. Pastor Greven had asked, 'How do you want your prayer life to grow?' I saw a consistency in their lives."

Pastor Greven and Mary are moving into the parsonage of West Lisbon Lutheran Church in Newark, Illinois, where he will again serve as a parish pastor. May God bless them in their new ministry.

— Solveig Hjermstad

Missions Conference challenges students

"Then they said to one another, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent'" (II Kings 7:9a).

During February 11-14, seminarians and Bible school students participated in the annual AFLC Missions Conference held at the campus in Minneapolis. The evening speaker was Rev. Todd Schierkolk, missionary to Mexico. Morning chapel speakers were Dr. Francis Monseth, Rev. Paul Nash, Rev. Eugene Enderlein and Rev. Jonathan Abel, missionary to Brazil. Chuck Lindquist from the World Mission Prayer League

was the banquet speaker.

Monday morning was set aside for prayer on campus. Seminarians led in the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) of prayer. It was a wonderful way to prepare for the preaching of the Word of God.

The conference planning committee set a goal for the offerings at \$3,000 to be divided between the AFLC Youth Department summer missions, Home Missions BARNABAS teams and the AFLC mission in India. This goal was double what it was last year. The last night of the conference

1996 Annual Conference video available

The Conference Planning Committee of the West Coast invites you to view a six-minute video touring the beautiful facilities at Warm Beach Camp in Stanwood, Washington — site of the 1996 AFLC Annual Conference. It gives a brief tour of all lodging options,

meeting facilities, and recreation opportunities at the camp. Each of the pastors listed to the right has been given one copy of the video. Please make use of this resource. For more information call Pastor Earl Korhonen, Publicity Chairman at 360-568-6428.



AFLBS choirs begin spring tours

The 1996 Choral Club leaves campus on March 22, giving concerts along the way before arriving in South Texas. They expect to return home on April 5.

The choir has scheduled a "mini-tour" before their departure for Norway in late May.

March 22 at Bethany, Abercrombie, ND — 8 p.m.

March 23 at Victory Free, Park River, ND — 7 p.m.

March 24 at Trinity, Grand Forks, ND — 11 a.m.

and at Calvary, Fergus Falls, MN — 7 p.m.

*"What we are seeing is
God's grace at work."*

\$1,234.50 had been given and the goal of \$3000 seemed unrealistic. But when the offering was counted, \$3,384.50 was the total. World Mission Director Gene Enderlein said: "I think the offering was an indication of what God was doing in the hearts and lives of our students. I have begun teaching a missions class on campus and now having been with students every day during the conference, it is obvious God is doing a work in our schools in a special way."

Several students dedicated their lives to full-time service. A

senior AFLBS student wrote, "It was a joy to be among the students kneeling in prayer at the altar, praying with a friend and committing my will to God." Students have now initiated a prayer meeting on Friday nights. Dr. Monseth, AFLTS dean, is encouraged with reports of God's Spirit so evident in tender and receptive hearts. He said: "People are praying for us here on campus. What we are seeing is God's grace at work. He alone is to be praised."

— Solveig Hjermstad
with Kelani O'Neil

Eastern North Dakota

James Fugleberg, Fargo
Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks
Lynn Kinneberg, McVile
James Rasmussen, Park River
Joel Rolf, Valley City

Western ND/Eastern MT

John Mundfrom, Beulah
Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot
Jon Wellumson, Williston

South Dakota

Wayne Hjermstad, Faith
Lynn Wilson, Roslyn
Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls

Lake Superior

Peter Franz, Cloquet

Northwestern MN

Dennis Gray, Greenbush
Rodney Stueland, Roseau
Del Palmer, Thief River Falls

North Central MN

Jim Johnson, Fosston
Bill Goodman, Shevlin

Southwest Central MN

Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls
Elden Nelson, Willmar

Nebraska/Colorado

Scott Gray, Fairbury

Minneapolis

James Ritter, Bloomington
Mel Meyer, Amery
James Johnson, Osseo
David Keippela, Stacy

Central Tri-State

Einar Unseth, London
Reuben Unseth, Radcliffe

Northern Michigan

Dean Franz, Chassel

South Central U.S.

Michael Peterson, Pleasanton
Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City
Vincent Will, Springfield

Southwestern U.S.

Christian Andrews, Palmdale
Frank Cherney, Tucson

West Coast

Stephen Snipstead, Kalispell

Eastern U.S.

James Molstre, Bethel Park

Illinois

Clyde Grier, Milford
Brian Pearson, Montgomery
Tim Carlson, Wheatland

Humble yourself — Who, me?

Those words kept going over and over in my mind: “Humble yourself, humble yourself.” Verses from Scripture reinforced that this wasn’t an option, but a direct command from God. “If My people who are called by My name, will humble themselves ...” (II Chronicles 7:14). “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand” (I Peter 5:5,6). “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11,12). They are powerful words, and God was using them to cut deeply to my heart. Did I really need to humble MYself? Absolutely!

My first defense was to think about all the times and situations in my life when I’d been humbled. I believe that if we don’t humble ourselves, God has no alternative but to allow us to come under His corrective discipline through trials, other people, or circumstances of life.

Fresh on my mind were the struggles of this past summer which had crushed and broken me. God used my children to show me what a sinner I am, and that I have no self-righteousness of my own to boast about. I had to admit my sin of anger as a mother, and ask God to cleanse and remake me. The brokenness I experienced over my sins and failures gave me a fresh appreciation and dependence on Jesus as my only source of love, wis-

*“When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”*

dom, joy and peace, my refuge and my hope.

I believe God opened up my blind eyes to see the spiritual pride that was in my heart. I pondered that “my richest gain” was my “good” life of never living in rebellion or open sin, my standards, my accomplishments, and my reputation. I had to “count them but loss” and committed myself to a new awareness and hatred for the horrible sin of pride.

One dear sister in our church put it this way: “We must repent even of our own goodness.” In a new way I realized how destructive pride really is. It can destroy a life, a soul, a family, a friendship, and a church.

The Institute in Basic Life Principles workbook states: “Pride is building my life around myself and not caring about the needs of others. Pride is reserving to myself the right to make final decisions, and not submitting to the direction of God-given authority. Pride is thinking that I am better than others and judging them or looking down on them. Pride is refusing to ask forgiveness of those I know I have offended.”

Humbling ourselves must begin first before God in honest confession and repentance. Where have you disobeyed Him? Where have you resisted the promptings of His spirit? Where are you fooling yourself? You can’t fool God! “A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

Next we must humble ourselves before others, whether it is a friend, a neighbor, our family or at church. Whom do you need to call and get things cleared up with? Whom do you need to ask forgiveness from? Not one of us is exempt! “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16) No time of revival has come without it. This is what we want. This is what we need. May God help us to that end.

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:6,10) What steps will you personally take to obey?



— Mrs. Linda Korhonen
Cokato, Minnesota

“My brokenness ... gave me a fresh appreciation and dependence on Jesus”

That most important covenant

The Pilgrims acknowledged God's covenant with man and they in turn covenanted with God to be faithful to Him and to trust Him as they settled in their new land. Until they also committed themselves to one another, their communities floundered. The WMF March study helps us examine our covenant to God and to one another.

My covenant with God

The dictionary states that a covenant is a binding agreement or promise between two or more persons. Scripture mentions various covenants between individuals. God also made covenants. Remember His covenants with Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel, David and others. In each instance there was a condition of obedience, coupled with a penalty for disobedience. God always kept His promises. We often break our promises, but not so with God.

My covenant with God began when I committed my life to Him when I was confirmed. I promised "to love Him with all my heart, soul and might." I vowed to completely trust Him and serve Him. Then and until this day I have wanted to obey Him and His Word no matter what this obedience demands of me.

God's covenant to me brings to mind three secure promises that have been so precious to me.

God's pardon in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God's provision in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

God's presence in Hebrews 13:5b, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Following my marriage to Reuben Wee, a humble, compassionate, praying Christian who loved his Lord, we purchased a country store in southwestern Minnesota. The next 27 years we sold groceries and gas and expanded so that, among other things, we bought and sold chickens, corn and hogs. Reuben witnessed to those he worked with and spoke in area churches. For ten years he served in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

At age 58, Reuben fulfilled a lifelong desire to enter the ministry. He was ordained in June 1968, and was called to serve with Rev. Robert Lee at the Tioga, North Dakota parish. In 1970 we moved to Granite Falls to serve Faith Lutheran. He died during a morning worship service in 1974 — the day Rev. Dick Gunderson had come to take part in a mortgage burning service.

Throughout the years I have seen God keep His promises. I have prayed that these promises will be real to our seven sons and one daughter. We instructed them through family devotions, Sunday school, the hearing of the Word each Sunday and other Christ-centered activities. Though I fail, God forgives and renews my strength as I pray daily for my children, 22 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

I have found that it is most helpful to set a definite time for daily Bible reading and prayer. It is good to start the day in this

way. The many excellent devotional materials that are available help. My memory is aided by marking special Scripture passages or underlining in my devotional books. Consistent and persistent prayer is most important. This is how I have learned most to trust Him.

It is my desire to be faithful in my service and obedience to God. I continue to pray for courage to speak boldly of God's love to others as there is opportunity. I am learning patience. God took me one step at a time even before I committed myself to Him and He will continue to lead me because He keeps his promises. He will also lead those I witness to. I like also to clip inspirational thoughts from Christian publications to share with others.

Lamentations 3:22a says, "God's mercies are new each morning."

God is faithful. His supply of blessings is never exhausted. God keeps His covenant.



— Inez Wee
Granite Falls, Minnesota

The 1996 WMF Annual Convention June 19 Warm Beach, WA

The 1996 delegates will vote on the proposed WMF constitutional changes.

The next *Ambassador* will include an article clarifying these changes.

HOME MISSIONS

Washington church off Home Mission aid

New Vision Lutheran of Spokane, Washington, has voted to go off Home Mission status and is now self-supporting. Formerly called Bethany Lutheran, the congregation has been served by Rev. Doug Wagley since 1994.

Manhattan Beach, Minnesota — A newly formed Our Savior's Lutheran Church is meeting in the town hall of this little community near Whitefish Lake, about one hour north of Brainard. AFLC Home Mission Director Paul Nash met with them on February 4, 1996.

Rev. Paul Nash was a guest speaker at the Mid-Winter Bible Conference in Fosston, Minnesota. Later during the same weekend, he spoke at the 15th Annual Missions Conference at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, February 23-25. Missionary Jonathan Abel also spoke at the conference focusing on the theme from Psalm 67:1-2, "Blessed to Be a Blessing."

Rev. Ron Knutson, Kerkoven, Minnesota, has been appointed to temporarily fill a vacancy on the AFLC Coordinating Committee. That position along with the other one recently filled by Mr. Vince Larson, Buffalo, North Dakota, will be open for nomination at the annual conference in Warm Beach, Washington in June, 1996.

Rev. Walter Beaman, Argyle, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Alma and Our Savior's Lutheran where he has served since 1992. His future plans are to live in Fisher, Minnesota, and continue his studies in a chaplaincy program.



Pastor Orville Hiepler of Community Lutheran Church, Oceanside, California; Pastor Henry Mohagen, Towner, North Dakota, member of Home Missions Committee; and Director of Home Missions, Rev. Paul Nash.



Escanaba, Michigan — Pictured are Eleanor and Lloyd Lee at a reception given in their honor on December 31, 1995, at Escanaba Free Lutheran Church. Mr. and Mrs. Lee were celebrating their wedding anniversary and his 85th birthday. They are the parents of one son, AFLC President Robert Lee and one daughter, Carol.

Escanaba Free Lutheran was a Home Mission congregation and has now been self-supporting for over three years. The congregation is served by lay pastor Orville Jensen.

Upsala, Minnesota — Word of Life Lutheran is putting up the sheet rock in their new church building. The congregation, organized in 1988, has about \$75,000 into the facility already and is doing so without going into debt. Until it is completed, the congregation continues to worship in a rented hall in Upsala.

The AFLC Schools' Corporation has scheduled a special meeting for March 16, 9 a.m. at the campus at 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd. in Minneapolis.



Ray, North Dakota — Pictured are Rev. Steve and Linda Odegaard at the Tioga Long-term Care Center where Beaver Creek Lutheran serves the residents pancakes and waffles twice a year. Since this picture was taken, Linda has had a leg amputated below the knee and Pastor Odegaard was hospitalized for tests. Both are recuperating at home.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Rev. Laurel Udden, New Hope, Minnesota, has recovered significantly from his stroke suffered last fall. He is now able to swallow food and can drive the car again. He is thankful for all the concern and prayers on his behalf given by the AFLC family. "And especially," he wrote, "the Lord's presence and healing hand."

Rev. Lloyd Quanbeck and his family have a new address: 1701 Terrace Dr., Minot, ND 58703. Phone numbers: 701-852-3940 (H) and 701-852-6492 (O).

Newark, Illinois — West Lisbon Lutheran hosted a "Walk Thru the Bible" New Testament Seminar on Saturday, February 24, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. The Illinois District annual meeting followed

Dexter, Minnesota — Zion Lutheran held special meetings on February 4-9, with Rev. Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as the guest speaker. Besides the men's breakfast and youth night, the congregation hosted a salad supper for the ladies as a special opportunity to invite guests who then stayed for the evening evangelistic service.

AFLC Memorial gifts

January 1996

Name	Given by	Department
John Normand	Pearl Normand	World/Home Missions
Marie Morken	M/M Gordon Gunderson	AFLBS
	Ny Stavanger Ladies Aid	World Missions
Anna Besserud	Ronald/Shelah Jacobson	World Missions
Mrs. Layton Hunter	Ronald/Shelah Jacobson	World Missions
Gilman Stennes	Edgar Olger/Nora Rokke	AFLBS
	Adeline Stennes	AFLBS
Borghild Boe	Otto Seidelman	World Missions
Torkel/Elaine Ose	Roger/Janet Ose	AFLBS
Dora Dalager	The Dalager children	AFLC Schools
Clair Zick	M/M Percy Strand	AFLBS
Vera Mae Brunner	M/M Burton A. Olsen	World Missions
Elida Jeglum	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
Mrs. Purdon Wold	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Clara Johnson	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Rev. Kermitt Grundahl	Anna Marie Dahle	AFLTS
Ella Simonson	Esther Larson	AFLTS
Mamie Jensen	Darrel/Bette Ford	World Missions
Catherine Elise Christopherson	Pete/Krista Mischo	AFLBS Music Dept.
John Simpson	Ernie/Darlene Miedema	AFLTS
Leonard Swanson	M/M Kenneth Rolf	AFLBS

West Coast District Bible Conference was held March 1-3, 1996, at Spencer Creek Lutheran Church in Eugene, Oregon. The theme was "Prayer — Opening the Door to God" from Revelation 3:20. The WMF Spring Rally was on Friday, March 1, and the conference began that evening and continued through Sunday. AFLC President Robert Lee was the guest speaker with three district pastors leading the Bible studies.

In Memoriam

Carmen Lombardo, 88, Des Moines, Iowa, passed away on February 13, 1996. He is survived by his wife, Thelma, and sons Joe, Phil and Rev. Steven Lombardo, Morris, Illinois.

Earl Nelson, 89, Lake Preston, South Dakota, passed away on February 14, 1996. He was a charter member of Calvary Free Lutheran in Arlington. He is survived by his son, AFLC vice-president, Rev. Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minnesota, and one daughter, Ruth Dyrdahl of Oldham, South Dakota.

Delores Grothe, 66, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, passed away on February 15, 1996. She is survived by her husband, Philip Grothe, a former member of the AFLC Coordinating Committee, and four children: David and Donald Grothe, Diane Holte, and Darlene Swanson — all former AFLBS students.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - January 31, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$241,472.00	\$21,550.02	\$21,550.02	9
Seminary	122,626.00	7,728.37	7,728.37	6
Bible School	184,696.00	13,940.32	13,940.32	8
Home Missions.	253,270.00	18,615.98	18,615.98	7
World Missions.	341,257.00	55,951.08	55,951.08	16
Capital Investment	24,639.00	1,005.14	1,005.14	4
Parish Education	49,289.00	6,261.49	6,261.49	13
Church Extension	15,018.00	625.11	625.11	4
TOTALS	\$1,232,267.00	\$125,677.51	\$125,677.51	10
TOTALS 1994	1,484,851.00	86,749.67	86,749.67	6
Goal 8%				

Lutheran Estonian American Friends, 1992-96

A visit to remember

The month was March, and the year was 1992. Eight Lutheran pastors from America — Tom Brock, Chuck Eidum, Marty Horn, Bob Lee, Mel Meyer (with his son Mark), Todd Olson, Bob Rieth, and Joe Weiss — traveled to the newly independent nation of Estonia. The purpose of their visit was to attend a convocation in the capital city of Tallinn sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ, where many Estonian Lutheran pastors were expected. But the anticipated number of pastors never materialized, and the Americans wondered why the Lord had brought them there.

Then they met an Estonian Lutheran pastor named Eenok Haamer, a man with a vision for training religion teachers for the public schools. Estonia was facing "a moral and ethical crisis" after fifty years under communist control, and the leaders of the country were ready to bring the Bible back into the classrooms. Now there was a need for teachers, and Pastor Haamer determined to establish an institute for preparing them in the Word of God.

The American pastors rode to the old university city of Tartu, a probable location for the new school. "How can we help you?" they asked. A goal of ten thousand dollars was suggested, and the eight pastors pledged that they would return to the United States and raise the necessary funds for this project, convinced that the Lord had placed them in a position where they might influence the spiritual direction of a whole nation. This was the beginning of L.E.A.F., Lutheran Estonian American Friends.

A vision to renew

The year is 1996, and four years have passed since the eight

pastors visited Estonia. The Tartu Theological Academy is training religion teachers for the public schools, supported in part by gifts that continue to be channeled through L.E.A.F., beyond the initial pledge of ten thousand dollars that was contributed. Each year instructors from America, including Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLC Seminary Dean, have traveled to the Baltic republic and served as guest faculty members for at least one of the two-week terms.

Estonia continues to develop as a free nation, and has changed dramatically since the eight pastors visited there in 1992. The original vision survives, and the academy still stands in need of support. A few of the original L.E.A.F. founders meet monthly, together with Dr. Monseth and Pastor Don Richman, director of the East European Missions Network, maintaining regular contact with Pastor Haamer and others while providing limited publicity for the work in Estonia through a newsletter. Yet gradually there has been a significant decline in both interest and support.

The time has come to renew

the vision. The L.E.A.F. Board of Directors recently met with Dr. Monseth after his return from Estonia, where he issued an invitation on its behalf for a pastors' conference. The leaders of the Estonian Lutheran Church responded positively, and plans are already in progress for a group of pastors to travel there next October. Rev. Don Richman has agreed to serve as the U.S. chairman, and his Estonian counterpart is Rev. Ove Sander. A tentative schedule has been formulated, including a visit to the academy in Tartu, and the committee's hope is that as many as possible of the original eight pastors will be able to return together with other interested friends.

It is good to remember the birth of a vision in 1992 for working together with our Estonian Lutheran friends, and to have witnessed the unfolding of this vision during the past four years. Now it is our prayerful expectation that the vision will be renewed and expanded in 1996. Please stand with L.E.A.F. in your prayers for a new commitment to influence an entire nation for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom!



—Rev. Robert L. Lee



A number of AFLC pastors were among the 42,000 who were in attendance at the Promise Keepers' National Clergy Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, February 13-15. The theme of the historic conference was "Fan into Flame." The heart of the three days was spent receiving training and encouragement from God's Word and joining together in worship and prayer. (For further commentary on the conference see the editorials page.)

Our reason for being

Some groups have meetings where the main agenda is setting the time for the next meeting. Once that item is taken care of the group has little idea what else to do. They feel they are suppose to meet. They just aren't sure why.

Sadly, Christians and congregations can become like that. We know congregations are suppose to exist and we ought to belong to one. We know we should get together. Sometimes, however, it gets forgotten as to why.

The early Church knew why they existed. They knew their calling and their reason for being. It was all centered on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They had a purpose for existing, a work to do and a message to proclaim. Jesus was alive!

The fact of the Resurrection, the transforming power of it and the need to declare the news is the theme that flows throughout the book of Acts. "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact" (Acts 2:32, NIV). "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this" (Acts 3:15, NIV). "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NIV).

The Church existed then and now to let the world know that Jesus is alive. We make that known with our words and our lives. The good news is declared by the way we love, the way we serve, the way we worship.

It is easy to get distracted from our reason for being. We are called to do good works, but we do them because Jesus is living within us. We do not simply give instructions for living; we point people to the living Lord. We do not exist mainly to shed light on the errors of others; we exist to declare the great work that God has done. Our purpose in life is not to gain honor for ourselves, but to bring honor to God by proclaiming His greatness and love demonstrated in the crucified and risen Christ.

"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (I Corinthians 15:14,19, NIV). Playing church is a lot of wasted effort if Jesus is still in the tomb. The good news is Jesus is not in the tomb, but in the hearts of His followers. Is He living in your heart today? When He is, we have a tremendous purpose for being and a reason for living.

God was there

I was there at the Promise Keepers' National Clergy Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, February 13 to 15. So were 42,000 other pastors. The fact that 42,000 pastors found time in their schedules for the same event was amazing, but it was the presence of God that made the conference truly significant.

We trusted that God would be present not because of the large number of pastors or the quality of the speakers and musicians. God was there not because of something men did, but because of His grace and His faithfulness to keep His Word. He promised that "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20, NIV). What a privilege to gather with brothers in the presence of our heavenly Father!

It was a gathering of brothers although we came from different areas, different traditions, different ethnic groups. We had in common our one Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

For myself one of highlights of the conference was the message by Max Lucado on unity followed by a song sung by Steve Green entitled "Let the Walls Come Down." Lucado spoke about how the Church is like a battleship. The folks on the ship have a variety of different tasks, but there is only one ship and one Captain: Jesus. The battle is fierce but the ship is secure. The fear is not over the safety of the ship

but the harmony of the crew.

Some on the ship are concerned with the seriousness of the Christian life and the perceived frivolity of others. They occupy the stern of the vessel. Others feel a certain posture in prayer and worship is crucial. They are in the bow. Some think a terrible storm will come before we reach our destination. Others say the storm will not come till we are safe in the harbor.

Some stay in their room and think they are the only ones on the ship. Others look around them and wonder how those people ever got on board.

Failure to reach safe harbor is certain for all the others who are lost at sea. Our ship is the only one that is secure and has a destination that is sure, because our Captain is the Lord. Some, however, look at our ship and they choose not to come aboard, because they do not want to get involved in the fights that are going on among the crew.

How sad and shameful it is when one member of the crew attacks another. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NIV).

Let us be a crew that loves one another so that others will want to come aboard. Let us give testimony to the presence of God by the way we treat one another.

BUILDING THE BASE

What is the Holy Christian Church?

Why is the Holy Christian Church holy? In Sverdrup's explanation of Luther's Small Catechism the Holy Christian Church is described as "the congregation of saints or true believers, where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered according to the ordinance of God." The Church is holy because the Holy Spirit comes to her through the Word of God and sacraments, making her holy through His indwelling. Where they are not found, neither holiness, nor a Christian, nor a Christian congregation will be found. (See also the Augsburg Confession, Articles 5 and 7.)

God has chosen to bring the Christian Church into existence, to build it, and to preserve it through the means of grace. These means seem foolish and inadequate to us. The disciples, facing 5,000 hungry people and having only five loaves and two small fish, asked, "What are these for so many people?" We might ask the same question when, equipped with such seemingly inadequate tools, we face the challenge of discipling the world. But just as the loaves and fish in the hands of Jesus became a feast in the wilderness, so the means of grace, placed in the hands of the Church by our Lord, work effectively to accomplish God's intended purpose.

The Bible teaches that God's grace and Spirit come to us through the means of grace. Though God could, if He chose, give His grace apart from these means, we have no assurance from Him that He will do so. In the same way, God could keep you alive without food. But you would be foolish to starve yourself to death, expecting God to sustain your life, while you persisted in rejecting the means He has chosen for doing so. For that reason believers in the Christian Church "by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men" (Fundamental Principles).

Because the means of grace have the appearance of weakness and foolishness they are sometimes replaced with other tools. A form of "Christianity" may be developed but it is only a hollow shell. When the means by which saving grace comes has been removed, spiritual life cannot be produced. To look for saving grace anywhere else but in the Word and sacraments is in essence an attempt to add to the Word. To say that saving grace is not offered here is to take away from the Word of God. To do either shows a lack of confidence in the wisdom of our redeeming God.

God has highly honored the

Christian congregation. To her belong the means of grace. Hers is the joy of bringing little children to the baptismal font where Jesus meets them and gives them faith to trust in Him; of teaching those children, and adults, the Word of God that can sustain them in faith or return them to faith if they have strayed; of bowing at the Lord's Table and receiving from Him His "given for you" body and blood and by them being assured that sin's penalty has been paid!

The church's rich treasure has been well-summarized by Nicolai Grundtvig, the great Danish hymn writer:

Here stands the font before our eyes telling how God did receive us;

The altar recalls Christ's sacrifice and what His table doth give us.

Here sounds the word that doth proclaim

Christ yesterday, today the same, yea, and for aye our Redeemer.



— Rev.
Bruce Dalager
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks,
North Dakota