

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 20, 2001

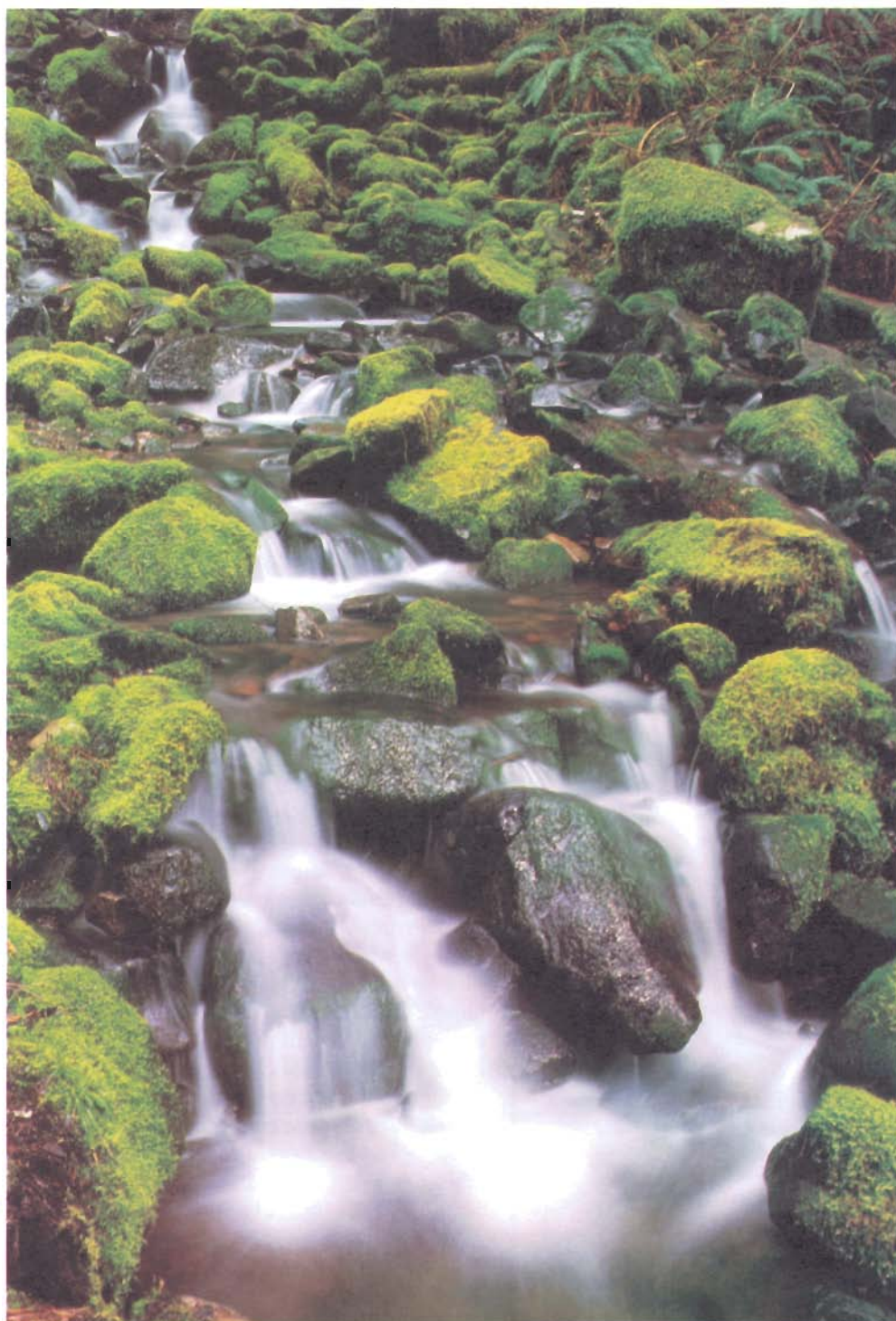
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March 20, 2001  
Volume 39, Number 4



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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Empty is good!

**T**he word "empty" can carry many connotations, but when it is connected with Christ's resurrection, it bears the sweetest connotation of all! The angelic message at the empty tomb: "He is not here; He is risen," are the most glorious words any child of God could possibly hear. They indicate several truths about our Lord and Savior.

The empty tomb and the angelic message reassure us once again that God always keeps His word. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus clearly identified that His mission would be one of a living sacrifice. Time and again Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection. Those words became a reality. Jesus died and rose again. Everything happened just like He said it would. If the greatest of all God's miraculous promises was fulfilled down to its minutest detail, what marvelous assurance we have that all His other promises will come to fruition just as He said they would.

The empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection give credence to our faith. Listen to the Apostle Paul's words in I Corinthians 15: "If there is no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Faith is only as sound as its object. If our faith is placed in something faulty, it will prove futile. We need a sound basis for our faith, otherwise we are no better than a hopeless dreamer scurrying from one wish to the next. In Jesus Christ, we find the solid rock, the only infallible object in which to place our faith.

This Rock has also promised that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Friend, if you have received Jesus as your Savior, do you truly believe the above-mentioned promise? If His greatest promise has already come true, why not this one as well?

The empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection prove, beyond any doubt, that His death was effective in paying our sin debt. That very thing, which had isolated us from God, was removed forever. What we could never do for ourselves, weakened by sin, He did for us being made sin (II Corinthians 5:21). His resurrection proved His victory. Had He remained in the tomb, we would never know for sure if His death was effective. Easter is truly a celebration of deliverance.

The empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection guarantee our own resurrection. In I Corinthians 15:21-22, Paul states: "For since death came through a man (Adam), the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man (Jesus). For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." What a blessed present reality. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are taken from a state of death in sin to life in and through Christ. This life has a future component to it as well. It too centers around a resurrection. Read Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:42-44 and rejoice!



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

Christ in His Supper willed to confirm and seal to His disciples the demonstration and application of the promise of

**1** the Gospel with a certain and firm guarantee, so that in the face of all temptations faith can stand strongly and firmly in the assurance that it is a participant in Christ and all His benefits unto salvation.

—*Martin Chemnitz*

They (the first disciples of Jesus) saw Him. They talked with Him, ate with

**4** Him, for a full forty days. They did not believe in His resurrection because the tomb was empty.

They believed because they had personally encountered the risen Jesus.

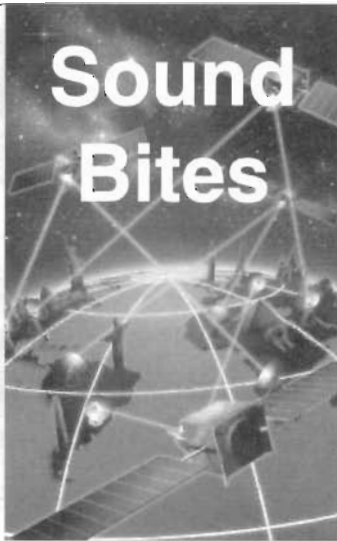
—*Michael Green*

**6**

**According to Scripture we can know neither God nor man except through the cross. The theology of the cross is a theology of revelation.**

—*Herman Preus*

## Sound Bites



**2** **Without a cause men hated Christ; without a cause he loves them.**

—*Milton S. Agnew*

God Himself had to have compassion on our misery and to conceive a plan for our deliverance. ... This had to be done by Christ, the Son of God Himself, and He therefore became man, that is, took upon Himself death and its cause, sin and the wrath of God, in order that He might free us from these and bring us to life and righteousness.

—*Martin Luther*

We are to live now by faith as though we have now already been raised from the dead. ... in our thoughts and lives now we are to live as though we had already died, been to heaven, and come back again as risen.

—*Francis Schaeffer*

**5**



# Guilty

— Pastor Jeffrey A. Iverson  
Word of God Lutheran Church  
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

**I**magine for a moment that you are the defendant on trial in a criminal case. The deputy opens the door and the jury files in. They look relieved to have it over. “Do they really understand me?” you think to yourself. “Yes, it’s true. I did it, but I didn’t mean to. It was a horrible mistake. Don’t they know that I’m basically a good person? I love my family. I work hard. I go to church. I volunteer at the senior center. Don’t these good works outweigh one little mistake?”

The judge looks at the jury and says, “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?”

The foreman stands and says, “We have, your honor. We find the defendant guilty.”

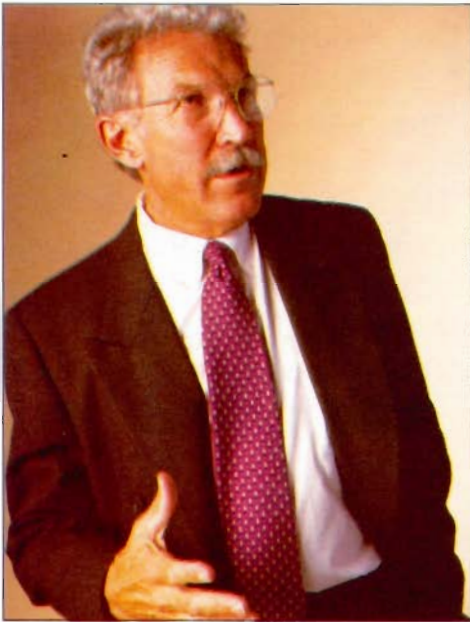
You slump into the chair. The room begins to swirl around you. You start sobbing to yourself, “I know I did it, but I didn’t mean to. Why is this happening to me?” All you can hear now are the words of

that foreman over and over again in your head. “We find the defendant guilty.”

**G**uilt is not a feeling. It is a state of being, defined by the law and the courts. It is the fact of having committed an offense against the law. We are all guilty. Paul writes, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23-24, RSV). John reminds us, “Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness;

sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

Some day each and every one of us will stand before the throne of God, the righteous judge (Psalm 7:11). Our accuser, the devil (Revelation 12:10), will be standing there with a list of all our transgressions, large and small. Even if we have successfully managed to avoid breaking the civil and criminal laws of our society, we have all broken God’s perfect law (Psalm 19:7). Jesus says, “But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:22). We all deserve nothing but God’s wrath and eternal punishment.



God is not some lady justice in the sky, holding a balance scale with our good deeds on one side and our bad deeds on the other. Once we have broken God's perfect law, nothing else matters. We are guilty and we deserve eternal damnation.

Martin Luther knew this and was deeply troubled. He knew he was guilty and deserved God's eternal wrath and punishment. The image of God as a righteous judge terrified him. He felt utterly deserted by God. The medieval church told him he could atone for his sins by becoming a monk and devoting his life to prayer, good works, and the denial of the flesh. But the harder he tried, the more he became aware of his guilt and that he could do nothing about it. Luther writes: "Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners ... Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place (Romans 1:17), most ardently desiring to know what Paul wanted.

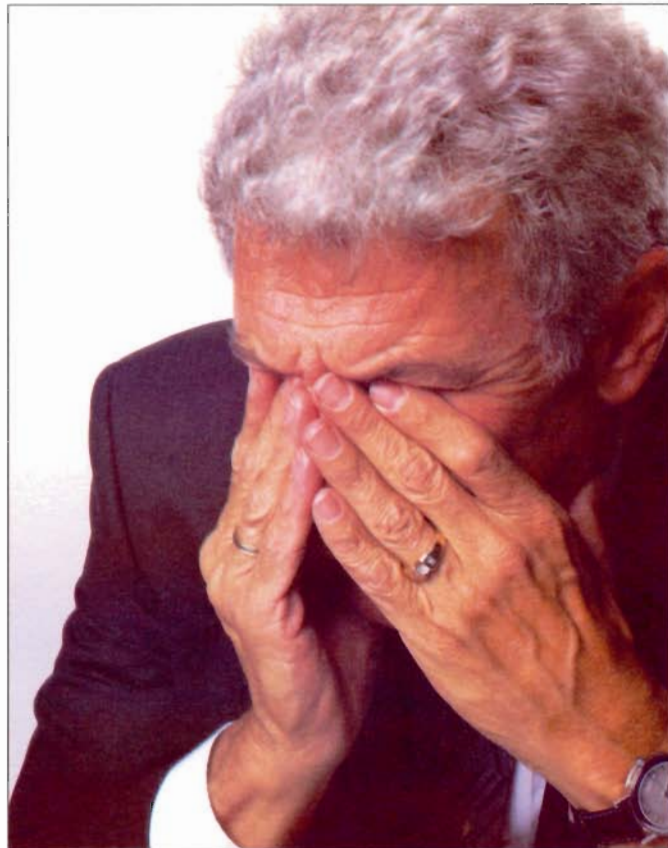
"At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."

Once again, imagine yourself as the convicted criminal. You enter the courtroom for sentencing. The judge is smiling. "Sit down," he says. "I have good news for you. You have been issued a pardon. You are free to go."

Your world is a swirl. "How? Why?" you stammer. "I never asked. I never thought such a thing was possible."

None of us deserves God's forgiveness, either. But in Christ we are righteous because God says we are. Jesus paid the price for our sins, and we are free to go.

Christians who have been forgiven, who have been set free, can proclaim to others the good news of God's forgiveness for sins. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). That is news worth sharing.



I lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God;  
He bears them all and frees us  
From the accursed load.

I bring my guilt to Jesus,  
To wash my crimson stains  
White in His blood most precious,  
Till not a spot remains.

— *Horatius Bonar*  
Ambassador Hymnal No. 396



# The most beautiful place I know

**T**he most beautiful place I know reeked of death and decay in the beginning. Vultures circled overhead. The place, like a leper, was shunned by even the lowest of society. However, it was there my true love died.

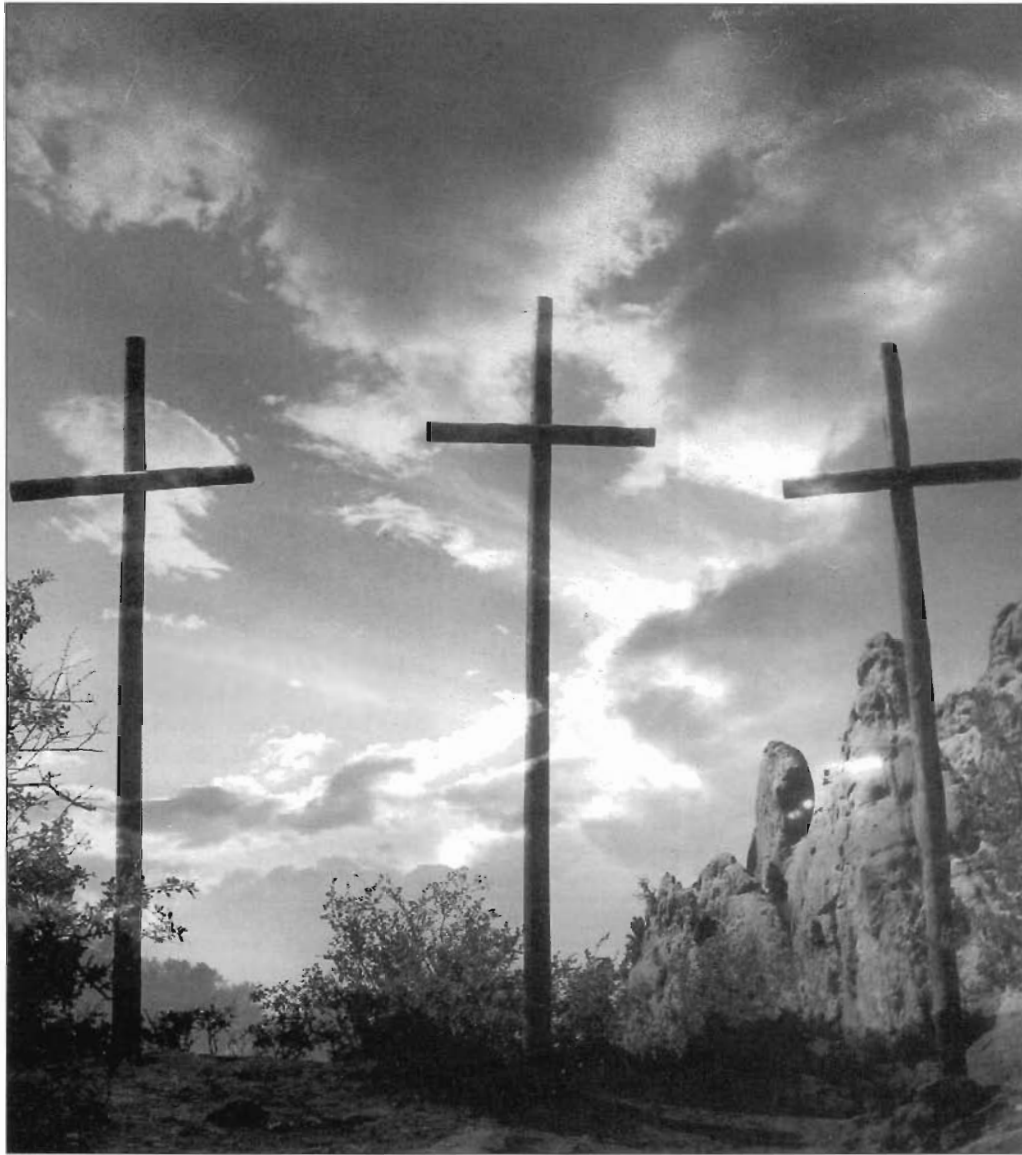
While He was calm and steady, I was like a rubber ball bouncing everywhere. I was forever drawing lines in the dirt and daring others to fight me. More than once, He averted the attention

of the crowd so I could regain control of my temper. More than once, He diverted the mob so I could rethink my position. More than once, He took the blows that were meant for me. But in spite of all His endeavors, I rarely acknowledged His presence, much less His help, which I viewed as an irritating annoyance.

With the backing of “polite” society, a band of ruffians snatched Him from the streets. A mock trial was held. He was ridiculed, beaten, and starved. When they failed to break Him, they carted Him away to a nearby hill where the stench of the dying caused even the most stalwart to gag. There they continued to torture Him until He died.

Throughout His ordeal, He remained silent. He did not rave against the injustice of the treatment. Nor did He tell them that I was the one who should be executed. Instead, He took my place and left me with the most priceless gift of all — life.

The most beautiful place I know reeked of death and decay in the beginning. Today, people flitter among merchants hawking shiny



Luoma photos

baubles like butterflies. Yet I still see the place as it was then. A hill strewn with bones and the city's rejected. Then, just when I'm ready to proclaim that I was not worthy of so great a sacrifice, I can feel His gentle presence near me — reassuring me, comforting my troubled heart, and encouraging me to go on. The most beautiful place I know is the hill where Jesus showed me just how much He loved me.



—Linda Davis  
Aberdeen, South Dakota

# Getting a grasp on the meaning of grace

**S**ome years ago a friend of mine said, “I was a Christian for many years before I knew what grace was.” Indeed, it seems far easier for us to learn the catch phrases about grace than to get a real handle on what it means as we live here where the rubber meets the road. During this Lenten season, we appropriately contemplate Julia Johnston’s words: “Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt! Yonder on Calvary’s mount out-poured — There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.”

As my friend admitted, perhaps some of us speak this language without understanding the meaning of grace. Heresy is truth out of balance — taking one truth at the expense of all other truth. That has always been the devil’s game and we fall for it time and again. Is it any wonder that our enemy will try to get us off balance on the important subject of grace? This article is yet another attempt to help someone catch a little better grasp on the vast study of grace.

## **The Source of Grace**

God is both the author and finisher of faith. Our salvation was in the mind of God from the beginning. At the right time Jesus Christ was born into the world for the express purpose of giving His life on the cross to pay for our sins. Paul reminded the Corinthians that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” Moreover, rather than help, we hinder in our salvation for we read in Romans 5:8, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The more clearly we see this simple fact, the more firmly we will get a grip on grace.

The very word “grace” means undeserved and unearned favor. As has been stated, “The religion of the Bible is a religion of grace or it is nothing at all.” Ephesians 2:9 explains clearly that we are saved by God’s grace alone, “not by works, so that no one can boast.”

## **Our Response to God’s Grace**

Faith is the means of responding to divine grace. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). The same Bible that teaches that salvation is by grace alone is just as clear that man needs to respond. To keep our balance on grace we must keep both of

these divine truths in focus.

Following are a few brief references that speak of a response of faith:

Repent — Acts 2:38

Receive — John 1:12

Call — Acts 2:21

Come (to Christ) — John 6:37

Confess (your sins) — I John 1:9

Open (the door) — Revelation 3:20

The problem clears for us when we see from Scripture that God in His grace issues the call. Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44a). Later John records Jesus’ words: “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (6:37). Finally, as a result, “Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me” (John 6:45b). When the Spirit of God is calling you, you can and must, come to Christ if you want to be saved. He promises that if you come He will receive you.

When you look back you will see clearly that it was not your “decision” or anything else that saved you, but Jesus only. It was not even your faith, for that too, is a gift from God.

## **There is Grace Enough to Live By**

God’s grace follows the Christian all through life. His grace is sufficient in helping us to meet every temptation, trial or work. It is by God’s grace that we have a work to do. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” It has been said, “God builds into every servant what He wants to use them for.”

Should we someday be permitted to look back and see someplace where God may have used us, we will see clearly — it was only by His grace.

## **Let Them Come**

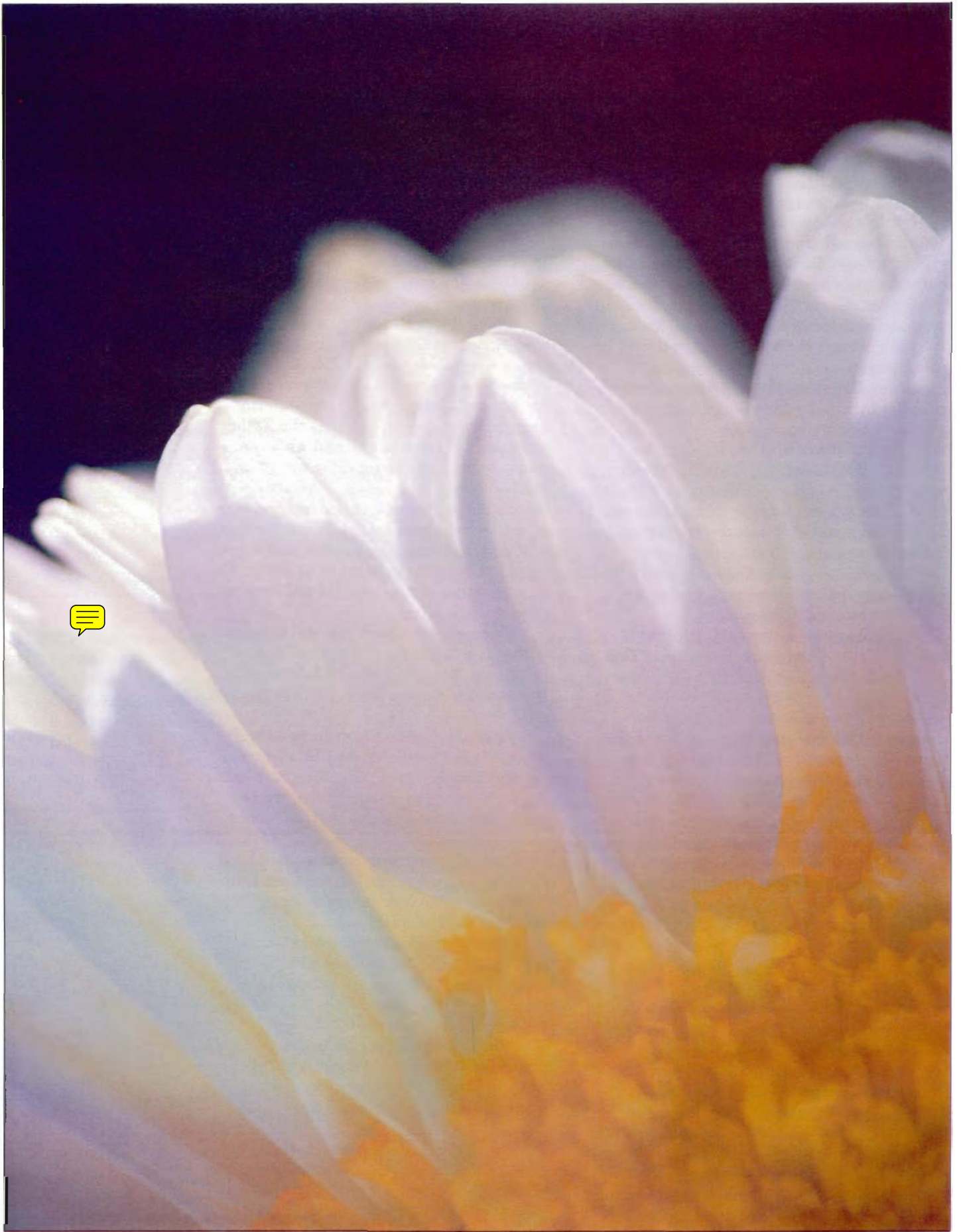
When the Spirit of God is at work in a person’s life, we should encourage them to come to Christ. This is in agreement with God’s Word. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come, and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17). Let them come!

— **Pastor Martin Christensen**  
**Bethel Lutheran**  
**Elbow, Saskatchewan**

*For is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, It is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

— **Ephesians 2:8-10**







# The glory of Easter

— *Pastor Henry Johansen*  
*Carlton, Minnesota*

**I**n order to accomplish the Old Testament promises of redemption God had to leave His dwelling place in glory and become man. He had appeared in a human form visible to men in the Old Testament, first to Abraham and Sarah to announce to them that they would indeed have a son in their old age (Genesis 18). Then He appeared to Joshua as the captain of the heavenly host at the outset of the conquest of the promised land (Joshua 5:13-15). These were important milestones as God proceeded to fulfill His promise of a Redeemer made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15).

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

God sent His Son to come to earth to dwell as man and reveal God to us (Hebrews 10:5; John 1:14).

The glory of Easter began as an instrument of execution, a cross. Isaiah wrote, "We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way but the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (53:6). Paul taught of Jesus Christ, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). The enemies of our Lord tried many times to kill Him, but could not. Only when God's time table for the work of redemption was complete, were they able to do with Him as they wished, and then only as He permitted them to do so (John 18:4-12). Our Lord remained in full control of every facet of the redemption. When our sin debt was paid in full, He said, "It is finished." He bowed His head and gave up His life.

The Resurrection gloriously transformed Jesus' earthly body into an eternal heavenly body. This glorified body is no longer bound by the restrictions of time, weariness, pain, hunger and thirst. But we still have our sinful nature of slowness to believe. Mary Magdalene was the first to see our risen Lord, though at first she thought Him to be the gardener. Only when she heard Jesus say her name did she believe and respond in faith calling Him "Rabboni," which means master.

It is good to rest in this great truth that

God knows our name and calls us by name. The believer in Christ can respond because we know our Shepherd's voice (John 10:4). It is altogether appropriate that this fallen woman whom Jesus released from demonic bondage should be the first herald of the Resurrection. Only a repentant sinner who has been raised from the grave of eternal loss to newness of life in Christ can understand the complete triumph over sin and its penalty.

It took a considerable amount of time for the disciples to be convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead. The final one was Thomas who, when he beheld and touched the marks of redemption in Jesus' hands and side, exclaimed, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus replied, "Thomas, because thou has seen me, thou has believed, blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:27-29).

It is to the glory of Easter that we too are included in that promise. It is to the glory of Easter that we can share the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection with others, and precious believers can be strengthened in their faith and others won to Christ. Paul wrote of the Thessalonian Christians, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy" (I Thessalonians 2:19-20).

The glory of Easter is in the indwelling Holy Spirit who came in power at Pentecost. It is by His living in us that we are made alive unto the Lord. It is He who helps us in prayer when our faltering faith and stammering tongue falls short in the overwhelming issues of life (cf. Romans 8:9-11, 26, 27).

Truly, we break out in profound praise in the words of Jude 24-25: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from failing, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

The songwriter, Charles Gabriel expressed it in these words:

"O that will be glory for me, glory for me,  
glory for me;  
When by His grace I can look on His face,  
That will be glory, glory for me."





# Lord, is it I?

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

During the Lenten season, we examine our lives and consider what Jesus has done for us. At Faith Lutheran Church in the Minneapolis suburb of Shakopee, we invite the community to examine their hearts together with us through the medium of a drama called, "The Living Last Supper." It has proven to be an effective tool for outreach where Christians and non-Christians alike can face the reality of their sins and their need for a Savior. The annual event has come to mark our existence in the community.

The setting of the drama is Christ's last meal which He shared with His disciples the night before He was crucified. The altar area of our sanctuary is transformed to resemble Leonardo da Vinci's painting of "The Last Supper." Although the picture may not be totally accurate when compared to what we know today about the culture of that time, it is well known and full of symbolism. For effect, we use stage lighting and spotlights in the darkened sanctuary.

The actors portraying the disciples, enter the room from the rear while discussing the events of the week. They debate what the meaning is of Jesus' recent, hard-to-understand statements. Sitting at the table, they strike the pose impressed on the canvas by da Vinci. The lights dim and the narrator speaks, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one of you who is eating with me." The audience sits in silence as the words penetrate.

One by one, each disciple leaves his



pose, stands and addresses the assembly. He shares aloud his innermost emotions and thoughts about Jesus and how the Master has changed his life. Each one ponders his own inclination to wander, and considers if he might be the one to betray his Lord. As each disciple ends his reflection, he cries out to Jesus in despair, "Is it I?"

The spotlight dims and the disciple returns to his pose. In the darkness of the moment, with the words still ringing in their ears, the audience listens as the narrator relates the traditional history of the disciple's life. Amazingly, most of them were martyred for their faith in Jesus.

Most striking are the thoughts and emotions of Judas, especially when we notice that his motives are not that different from ours. Interspersed with the thoughts of the disciples are traditional and contemporary Lenten hymns. They cause us to examine ourselves and point us to the cross. As the disciples solemnly leave the table, the worshipers are confronted with their own tendency to betray or deny the Lord while the narrator reads the poem, "Lord Is It I?"

*The bread is broken and the  
wine is poured,  
And once more grim Golgotha's  
hill is nigh.  
By whom is Christ again denied,  
betrayed?  
Or should we all cry out,  
Lord, is it I?"*

*A traitor kisses him upon the cheek:  
A fisherman unsheathes  
his sword nearby.  
Did this take place two-thousand  
years ago,  
Or should we all cry out,  
"Lord, is it I?"*

*A crown of thorns is pressed  
upon His brow,  
And bearing His own cross,  
He goes to die.  
Whose is the guild,  
the everlasting shame,  
Or should we all cry out,  
"Lord, is it I?"*

(EKE, 1968)

Although the drama is presented more than once during Holy Week, most of the Faith Lutheran family attends the Good Friday service. Jesus and one of the disciples serve communion that night, with the sanctuary still dimmed. Because the altar rail is obscured with the set, people file past Jesus and the disciples. As the worshipers are standing, it offers the opportunity to look them in the eye and say, "This is the body of Jesus," or "This is the blood of Christ." Pondering our own betrayals of the Lord, receiving the Lord's Supper, and hearing the words of absolution is truly a remarkable experience. The hours of waiting for Easter morn are intensified.

The audience silently leaves that darkened sanctuary to enter the dark fellowship hall where they pass the disciples kneeling beside candles before a rough-hewn cross. They exit into the dark of the night with the silence broken by a snuffle from those softly weeping.

Easter morn seems to arrive with greater brilliance and glory for the worshipers at Faith Lutheran.





## Just me

I am me, just me  
Unique  
Individual  
Neither better  
Nor worse than another  
Humbled in some ways  
Talented in other ways  
Imperfect  
Human  
And  
Forgiven

— John A. Gilder  
St. Cloud, Minnesota



# In the valley beyond

The vale of the Savior's sorrow is holy ground,  
where footfalls are hushed in the silence.  
For here is the place of passionate prayer:  
here Man meets with God in the anguish of  
deep intercession.

A sacred shrine is here, where the suffering  
love of all the ages  
is gathered up in the unspeakable agony of  
Christ our Lord.

And there, in the blue of the valley beyond, me  
thinks I can see the forms of others who have  
trod the pathway that leads to the Garden:



An ancient well between Jerusalem and Jericho.

*There Abraham walks, interceding for  
Sodom, pleading with God for the  
soul of a city;*

*There in the shadows the aged Job offers  
prayer for the friends who failed  
him in the hour of trial;*

*Moses is there, entreating Jehovah to blot  
his name from the Book —  
if only so his people may be spared  
from destruction;*

*David is there, his soul bowed in sorrow  
as he thinks of Absalom slain on the  
battlefield;*

*Elijah, too, broken in spirit and weary of  
life, fainting alone  
in the wilderness —*

*Hosea, with heart torn and bleeding for  
Israel's adulteries, more  
deep-stained than Gomer's —*

*Jeremiah, Prophet of Weeping and  
Judgment, burdened for Judah's  
transgression —*

*Daniel the Seer, oppressed for the  
sins of his brethren  
in the land of captivity —*

*Stephen the Martyr, asking  
forgiveness for his murderers —*

*Paul the Undaunted, ready to be  
accursed if so he may win his  
people to faith in the Savior —*

*John the Beloved, from prisons of  
Patmos seeing visions  
of victory for the Church in  
all generations.*



**Strange and unnumbered is the unseen throng  
which Faith may discern there in the blue of the valley:**

**For this is the Vale of Sorrow and Love,  
Where Man wrestles with God in prayer,  
that mankind at last may find its heritage of freedom.**

*— taken from  
The Lutheran  
Messenger  
March 1, 1934  
author unknown*

**Soul of mine,  
darest thou, too,  
to enter and kneel in the valley?**

# A woman of excellence cares for others and sows generously

There are many hurting, needy people in our lives if we take the time to look and listen. We probably don't have to look any further than our own homes. We often sing the familiar song, "People Need the Lord," but there have been times in my own life when I have needed someone with skin on. God has never let me down when I go to His Word for encouragement and strength to meet the day, but sometimes I also need a friend. I am thankful for friends and family.

Second Kings 4 tells the story of the hospitable Shunamite woman. As I read it, I tried to put myself in her place. What were her motives to care for a man who wasn't even related to her? I believe she had to have had a sincere love for the Lord and wanted to see revival in the town of Shunem.

She did what she could. She went to her husband and asked his permission to make a bedroom in their home for this man to use each time he came to Shunem. But the question that comes to my mind is "why didn't that husband think of this generous act?" Could it be that he was not the God-fearing, spiritual leader she desired him to be? Perhaps she knew that in her town and even her own home, a revival was needed so she was willing to go the extra mile. She cooked and cleaned and the prophet Elisha and his ser-

vant Gehazi shared many meals and nights in the guest chamber in her home. She was doing what she could and God did the rest.

The humble obedience of the Shunamite woman is a great example of hospitality. But there is One who gives us an even greater example and that is Jesus. He sets the standard when it comes to caring for others. When someone is sick, He heals. When someone sins, He offers forgiveness. When someone dies, He gives eternal life.

How about us? Can we ease the pain for someone on this road of life? Sometimes all that is need is a knock on the door asking how they are doing. Maybe a hug that says, "If I could take this burden from you, I would," or a phone call saying, "You are a terrific person and I love you in Jesus." We can't carry someone else's cross but we sure can make their load lighter by showing them we care, just as the Shunamite woman made Elisha's load lighter. She met his physical needs of food and a place to stay so that he

— Linda Nelson  
Maranatha Free Lutheran  
Willmar, Minnesota

could provide spiritual nourishment to people in Shunem. Was his job more important than hers? No way. God needs all parts of the body to work together for His good.

Jesus gave us the commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you." Can we love and care for one another in the same way Jesus loves and cares for us? Can we have compassion for someone who has had an ugly past and has made some mistakes along the way? I'm so thankful Jesus never gives up on me even when I am determined "to do it my way." He never quits loving me.

We never know what deed of kindness or word of encouragement God will use in someone's life. We are only called to be faithful in showing "urgent compassion" to a hurting world. May we continue to take the time to be kind and loving to one another. That's all Jesus asks us to do. He will do the rest.



## Women's Missionary Federation In Memory of

Helen Ness, Mentor, MN  
Dorothy Rehder, Beresford, SD  
Carl Carlson, Faith, SD  
Joanne Buergsrud, Faith, SD  
Altha Jordan, Faith, SD  
Gertie Joens, Faith, SD  
Alvin Dolezal, Chamberlain, SD  
Ella Blestrud, Tioga, ND  
Alvida Peterson, Zumbrota, MN  
Edna Schuur, Zumbrota, MN  
Marjorie Berg, Zumbrota, MN  
Paul Hinrichs, Czech Republic

## Women's Spring Retreat

May 4-6, 2001  
Association Retreat  
Center  
Osceola, Wisconsin



This retreat is sponsored by the national AFLC Women's Missionary Federation Board with a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood to minimize the cost. The board encourages every congregation to have representatives attend this weekend led by Sonlife Ministries Jackie Redmond from Colorado Springs, Colorado. For more information contact Pam Olson at 1-888-748-3969 or e-mail at [arc@aflc.org](mailto:arc@aflc.org) Please pre-register.

## Spring WMF rally schedules

**Southwest Central Minnesota**—Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran will host the rally on April 12. Pam Olson of Savage, Minnesota, will be the morning speaker.

**Illinois District** — Christian Free Lutheran in Wheatland, Iowa, is hosting the rally April 7. World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein is the morning speaker.

**Northwestern Minnesota** — Christ the King Lutheran in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, is hosting the rally on April 7. Sharilyn Walters of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, is the speaker.

**South Dakota District** — Trondhjem Lutheran in Volin is hosting the rally April 28. Cory Buck, Sinai, South Dakota, and AFLBS students from Eastern Europe are the guest speakers.



Encouraged by praying politicians

# Report on the National Prayer Breakfast

**L**ast February 1, 2001 the Washington Hilton Hotel's International Ballroom was filled with 3,500 people, and another thousand in the auxiliary conference room, awaiting the arrival of President George W. Bush, the main speaker at the 48th Annual National Prayer Breakfast.

This breakfast is the high point of the two-day gathering with people from every state in the U.S. and representatives from about 140 other countries. Organized and led by senators and representatives, the National Prayer Breakfast is a visible expression of the many quiet and often hidden prayer breakfasts, Bible studies and prayer meetings that occur every week among our government leaders.

The prayer breakfast movement began with a Norwegian immigrant, Abraham Vereide, who came to Seattle during the Great Depression. The thousands of unemployed and discouraged men led him to do the one thing he knew: to organize groups that would pray for the needy and the city and government officials. Eventually some of these people moved to Washington, D.C. and started doing the same thing on a national level. In 1952, the decision was made to invite people from other states to a national prayer breakfast as a way of encouraging the nation. Presidential involvement began in the 1950s when, through his friend, Kansas Senator Frank Carlson, then President Dwight Eisenhower asked if he could attend from time to time.

This year's gathering was the largest ever. I sensed a visible air of optimism and hope as the new administration took over the reigns of government. The program opened with a medley of national hymns by the Chattanooga Singers from the University of Tennessee. Admiral Vernon Clark, the Navy Chief of Staff, gave the opening prayer. A senator and representative shared

their experience in their respective weekly prayer breakfasts. Vice President Cheney spoke briefly and Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee brought an excellent message.

Then President Bush and his wife arrived. He spoke on the blessings of faith. "By faith we know we are precious .... By faith we know we are loved. People of faith are the conscience of our nation. And men and women created in the image of God are not to be used and exploited. Americans serve their neighbor because they love their God .... They do what the government can't do — give love and hope. Government must welcome private charities. We must not see them as rivals, but welcome them as partners. The days of discriminating against religious institutions because they are religious must come to an end."

The audience broke into a long applause. President Bush went on to say, "I believe in the power of prayer." Quoting another statesman, he added, "I would rather stand against the cannons of the wicked than the prayers of the righteous."

After the breakfast, we attended workshops led by congressmen. The experience was awe inspiring and encouraging, discovering so many of our leaders meet weekly for prayer where they share their burdens and pray for one another. In their Bible studies, they focus on Jesus. They discuss how to love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. They wrestle with questions like, "What does it mean to really love our neighbor as ourselves? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth?"

Perhaps the most inspiring moment was the testimony of two men from Africa, one from Rwanda and the other from Burundi. They were sworn enemies determined to kill one another. However, as only the Lord can plan, they met face to face on an airplane on their way to a prayer breakfast in South Africa.

Through Jesus they were reconciled. Now one of them is the president of his country and is leading his nation in seeking reconciliation through Jesus Christ.



George W. Bush

— *Pastor Don Richman*  
*Bloomington, Minnesota*

## Who will Roll Away the Stone

Who will roll away the stone?  
We cannot do it on our own.

The women wondered,  
yet they went.  
To reach their Lord,  
they were intent.

Their Lord had bled,  
their Lord had died.  
They had seen Him crucified.

The stone was moved;  
the Lord had risen.  
He was not held by death's  
dark prison.

Our stone of sin, of self, of pride.  
We cannot roll that stone aside.

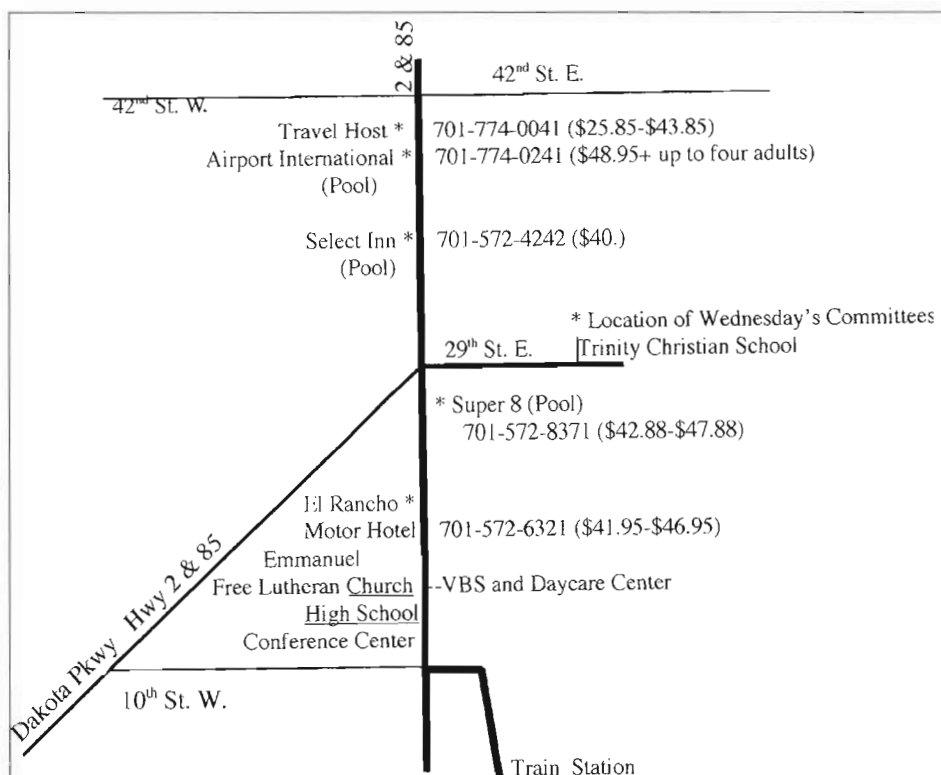
That stone so large;  
that stone so great;  
That stone that seems  
to separate.

Our stone of sin was rolled away.  
When Christ hung  
on the cross that day.

Now we can come before  
God's throne.  
For Christ has rolled away  
our stone.

— *Don Kujala*  
*Astoria, Oregon*

# 2001 Annual Conference housing information



## June 13-17 conference sessions will be held at the high school in Williston, North Dakota

### Camping

Buffalo Trails is located on the north side of town — 701-572-3206.

Prairie Acres RV Park is located on the west side of town — 701-572-4860.

Lunds Landing Resort is approximately 25 miles east — 701-568-3474.

### Notes of interest:

Williston High School, on W. Highland Dr., is one block away from Emmanuel Lutheran Church. All sessions will be at the high school, which is handicap accessible. The high school's field house is named after the school's most famous alumnus, Phil Jackson, currently coach of the National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Lakers. The El Rancho Motel is about six blocks from the school. There are numerous restaurants within walking distance of the school.

The train connections to Williston are excellent. Airline service is especially good when coming from the West. Other airline connections may be made with the Minot airport, 120 miles away. Other congregations in the district will provide vans to shuttle conference goers to Williston.

The registration form and the schedule for the conference will be included in the May 1, 2001 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Conference attendees are asked to please make their own housing arrangements. For more information call the Emmanuel Church office at 701-572-0138 or e-mail [jwellums@host1.dia.net](mailto:jwellums@host1.dia.net)

## Now is the time to plant

You can invest in the ministries of the AFLC through planned giving — wills, charitable remainder trusts, etc. For free advice call Mark Johnson at 1-800-950-2109



# Making new friends in Portugal



Olexander and Olga with Missionary David Nelson

**M**issionaries to Portugal, David and Sarah Nelson recently made new friends in Lisbon, Olexander and Olga. They are originally from the Ukraine. Olexander arrived in Lisbon two years ago to find work. He was a civil engineer; here he works construction. Olga arrived three months ago. She was a pediatrician; here she prepares food at a restaurant and cleans at an optical store. In the Ukraine, Olga became a Christian and joined a Bible-believing Lutheran Congregation. Upon her arrival in Lisbon, she

began to look for another similar church to the one she went to back home. She used the phone book to find the only Lutheran church in Lisbon.

"I have a letter from my pastor," she explained in a combination English and Portuguese. She wanted to transfer her membership from the Lutheran Church of the Ukraine to become a member of the Lutheran Church of Portugal.

Missionary Nelson writes, "Olexander and Olga are studying with me on Tuesday evenings. Recently, Olexander professed assurance of salvation through faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray for them in their struggles to find suitable housing and permanent work."

The Nelson family recently received an invitation to a birthday party. Paulo and Hugo attend the same school as Josiah. Paulo gave invitations for his "anos," or birthday party. He was careful to write down the address and explain which subway train arrives close to his apartment.

The Nelsons write, "Early Sunday evening, someone pushed the button on the intercom to our place — none other than Paulo and Hugo. They wanted to make sure we were coming to the party and could find it. Paulo and Hugo are a team — always together. Sarah and I asked if they lived in the same building. "In the same apartment," they responded. "Are you brothers?" "No, we are not." "Are you related to each other?" I asked. Again, the answer was no. I didn't get it, but I didn't want to ask any more questions; and they didn't want to volunteer any more information than what I knew.

"As we arrived. I saw a large apartment, full of 10- to 13-year-old boys and several staff members. One of the staff asked if we knew that the boys lived in a 'home' like this. No, we had no idea. It is a state-run 'temporary' shelter for young boys. 'Each boy was to be here only two to three days,' someone said. Paulo has been there three months; Hugo, three weeks.

"Paulo was delighted to see his little sister and brother, in addition to his mom and dad. After the party I asked whether or not the boys attend any worship services. 'No.' Could they? 'Sure.'

"Sarah has wanted to begin some kind of 'Kids' Club' with songs, stories and crafts. When I told Sarah about the party and the boys, we began to wonder if maybe we have found our opportunity to minister to some of the children in our city.

"We have been given permission to do a Kids' Club on March 1. After that, the staff will decide if it will continue on a weekly basis, or not."



The Association Retreat Center near Osceola, Wisconsin, is remodeling another building similar to Tabitha, which was completed two years ago. Pictured is the gutted-out facility when the project began last fall. The plans are on schedule for the May opening of the new 16-room hotel-like building. Bethany is the first building just southwest of the gym. The ARC is anticipating another busy spring and summer schedule. Please remember to pre-register for all ARC activities. For more information call Pam Olson at 1-888-748-3963.





**Shakopee, Minnesota** — Faith Lutheran dedicated their new educational unit on February 25. AFLC President Robert Lee was the guest preacher at both morning services. The congregation was formed in 1984 and built their facility in 1988. Pastor Del Palmer serves the congregation located in the southwest suburb of Minneapolis.

**Pastor Tim Skramstad**, Zumbrota, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran, where he has served since 1996, and accepted a call to Living Word Lutheran in Egan, Minnesota. He will begin his new ministry on July 1, 2001.

**Spokane, Washington** — New Vision Lutheran is hosting the Pacific Northwest District youth rally March 23-25. The theme is, "My place in this world." AFLC Youth Director Kevin Olson will be the main presenter.

**Ferndale, Washington** — "Praying with confidence" was the theme for the Pacific Northwest District Bible conference held at Triumph Lutheran March 9-11. Pastor John Mundfrom, Eugene, Oregon, was the speaker and other district pastors led special sessions. The WMF District Rally began the weekend with their meetings on Friday, March 9.

### Increase your mission giving — raise a steer



For more information on how you can multiply your mission giving, call the AFLC missions office at 763-545-5631.

**Pastor Paul Nash**, Minneapolis, Minnesota and his wife, Laurie presented a seminar entitled, "His Bride, the Church," to officers and wives of the United States Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colorado on February 23-25, 2001. Pastor Nash, the AFLC Home Missions director, became acquainted some years ago, with the chaplain at the academy when they both were living in the Wichita Falls, Texas, community.

**Loveland, Colorado** — Lutheran Church of Hope received good news on February 20, from the city council when they approved annexation of the church's property. The next step is the application for a building permit. The congregation is looking at the possibility of breaking ground on the construction of a new building in June. The home mission congregation is served by Pastor Larry Haagenson, who was recently asked to be the commander of police chaplains in Loveland. About a dozen pastors volunteer to serve as police chaplains in the community.

**Linda Odegaard**, 55, Tioga, North Dakota, passed away on February 27, 2001. Her husband, Pastor Stephen Odegaard has been serving Beaver Creek and Norman Lutheran Parish for the past 13 years. They recently accepted a call to the home mission congregation, New Hope in Snohomish, Washington. An obituary will follow in the next issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

**Lavon Bohling**, Hebron, Nebraska accepted the call from the AFLC Home Missions Committee for a new position as director of resource management. He began serving in this capacity on February 19. He will assist in the home missions office and will also give presentations to congregations on the work of home missions. These duties are in addition to the work he has been doing for the Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters (FLAPS) program as he continues to serve as the group's executive director. He and his wife Fern are making plans to move to the Minneapolis area. Contact the office at 763-545-5631 to schedule a presentation of the work of AFLC Home Missions as well as FLAPS.

**Camarillo, California** — Good Shepherd Lutheran installed Pastor Rodger Olson as their new pastor on January 7, 2001. The young congregation hosted a "friendship" Sunday recently with over 100 in attendance.

**Wilson, Wisconsin** — Christ the King Lutheran recently purchased a vacant school building, originally belonging to the Spring Valley School District, and have started remodeling it for their new church site. The building has over 8,000 square feet and is located on five acres.

The young church began meeting last March 12, and has been "mothered" by Amery Free Lutheran in Amery, Wisconsin. Pastor David Johnson of Amery makes the 45 minute drive every other week to hold confirmation classes. The congregation is being served by faculty, staff and students from the AFLC campus in Minneapolis.

Forty-five family units are active. They held their first annual meeting on February 11. They are preparing to adopt their constitution and open up the charter for new members.

Christ the King hopes to hold their first service in their own building later this spring. It is located near Interstate 94, southeast of St. Paul. They are conveniently off of Exit #28 and three and a half miles south on Highway 128. For more information and worship times, call 715-772-3216.

### You can still make it!

The 2001 FLY Convention  
July 16-21  
Estes Park, Colorado

Register online at [aflc.org/youth](http://aflc.org/youth)  
or call 763-545-5631

— Chad Jankord  
AFLBS senior

# Traveling and teaching in India and Sri Lanka

**T**his past January, Dr. Francis Monseth, FLTS dean, and I traveled to Chirala, a small city in southeast India, where the headquarters of the AFLC of India is located. The main reason for our trip was to teach the Word of God to all of the pastors, gospel workers, and Bible women. This annual seminar is the only formal biblical education many of them receive.

Dr. Monseth conducted these Gospel workers training sessions each day for about a week. Classes went from about 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. each evening. A few of the subjects that Dr. Monseth taught included the book of Exodus, the doctrine of Christ, and pastoral theology. During this week of teaching, I attended some of the classes but other days I taught math, English, science, and other general studies to the children at St. Paul's Lutheran

Public School. This school was started this last year by the AFLC of India. All subjects are taught in English and it already has 180 students attending. Classes range from kindergarten to sixth grade. This December they had a Christmas concert and invited all the children and their parents. Many of the Hindu parents and their children heard about Jesus for the first time. People in India want their children to get a good education, to learn English, and to learn discipline at a school with good morals. St. Paul's is expecting 500 students next year.

If I wasn't attending classes or teaching, I was with Dr. Anand Kumar, a certified doctor who has given up his pursuit for a private practice in order to serve the Lord with his special skills. Dr. Kumar travels to villages where he has established relationships with schools and congregations. He goes to each village once a month and gives preventative medicine to the children and checks on patients with specific needs. He works alongside of the AFLC of India. He has an effective ministry because his work opens the door for the sharing of the gospel in places it normally would be rejected.

In traveling with Dr. Kumar I got to know him well and to see his work firsthand. I also had opportunity to share Jesus with the school children after they had been given their medicines. Dr. Kumar shared with me some of his needs. He doesn't have a vehicle so he has to take a bus. For example, others went by taxi to a village he regularly visits, and it took about an hour. However, he told me he normally takes the bus, so at 5:00 a.m. I left by bus and arrived at that village four hours later.

He doesn't have sufficient funds or supplies to meet the needs of

each of the villages he regularly visits, and it's getting harder as the AFLC of India continues to grow. Another concern is that he doesn't have a clinic where patients can come with special needs. Instead, when medical attention is needed, he travels out to see the patient and often doesn't have the specific medicines or the medical equipment needed for treatment. If the patient is financially able, he would have to travel to the nearest hospital or clinic for help. In most situations, the patients do not have the money so they just don't get treated.

In one village we visited, Dr. Kumar was with a patient, Bobzi, who had many problems, specifically with his kidneys. Dr. Kumar was troubled but there was nothing he could do, and Bobzi had no way of paying a government hospital or clinic for the treatment needed. Two days after visiting that village, we learned that Bobzi passed away due to kidney failure.

This medical ministry is a powerful and effective way to share the gospel but the necessary funds for the ministry are needed.

After we had been there about a week, Pastor Enderlein, AFLC World Missions Director, arrived and joined us.

At night, after a day of class or traveling with Dr. Kumar, I had a couple of opportunities to share the Word of God at gospel meetings. One of the places we met was on the roof of a house with about one hundred and fifty people there with their Bibles open, eager to hear the Word of God. This was such an encouragement to me and my faith, because this hunger is something we rarely see here in the States.

After the week of classes was done, they had gospel meetings at the church in Bapatla, where Dr. Monseth had been teaching. We all shared the Word of God at these

*(continued on next page)*



**Pastor Martin Luther Sastry and Chad Jankord, from Sioux Falls, South Dakota.**

**Newark, Illinois** — Hope 2001 is scheduled for March 25-28 at the Newark High School gym. Pastor Michael Brandt is the speaker. Sponsoring the meetings are: Lisbon Bethlehem, West Lisbon, Newark, and Helmar Lutheran churches.

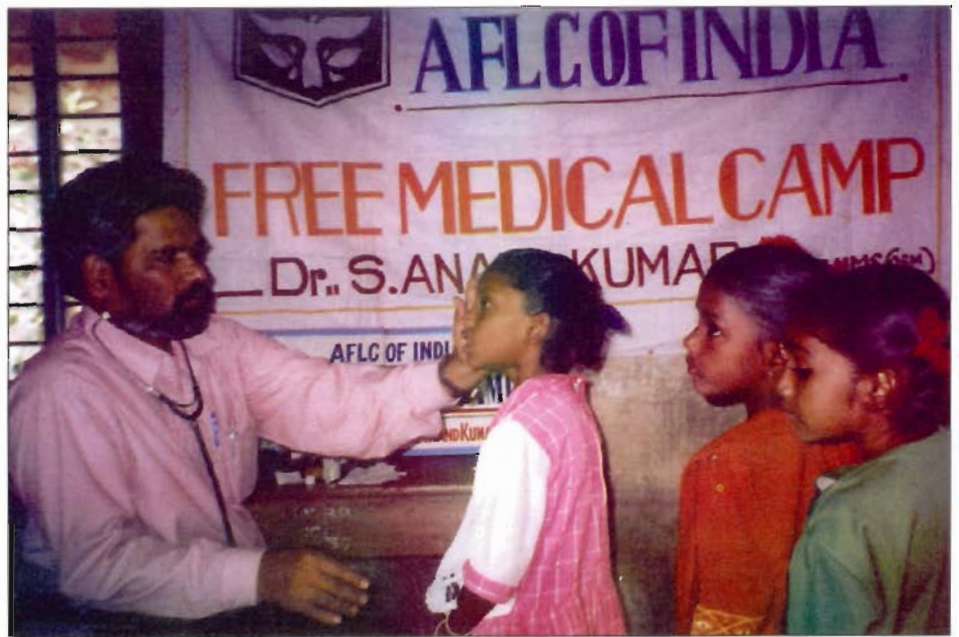


meetings and after the preaching, they showed the "Jesus" film, which had been dubbed in their language, Talugu. This film and film projector had been donated to the AFLC of India by Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota.

The time came for Dr. Monseth, Pastor Enderlein, Luther Sastry (the president of the AFLC of India), and me to travel off the coast of south-eastern India to the island nation of Sri Lanka. After driving up the winding mountain road we finally arrived at our hotel where we stayed all week. We met with the president of the Lanka Lutheran Church, his son, and a few of the pastors, evangelists, and gospel workers.

We had classes to train their workers, much like those in India, and on Saturday a youth gathering. They appreciated Dr. Monseth's classes and said they had never heard teaching like that before. On Saturday we had a youth gathering where over one hundred youth attended. The ages ranged from about eight to forty, so it's not quite like the youth groups we have here. In the morning Dr. Monseth and Pastor Enderlein taught the Word of God and in the afternoon Luther Sastry and I conducted a Bible quiz in the style of the Jeopardy game show. We enjoyed getting to know members of the Lanka Lutheran Church and the opportunity to see how the Lord is working among them. They asked us to come back next year. I pray that this relationship will grow stronger and that we'll have more opportunities to encourage them, and share the Word of God with them.

This was my second trip to India. Both times God has blessed me and I thank Him for what He is doing through the thirty-seven congregations, the school, the medical ministry, and an orphanage that Luther Sastry hopes to start up again sometime this year, provided the funding comes in. Join me in prayer for the work in India and Sri Lanka.



Dr. Anand Kumar with some of the children.



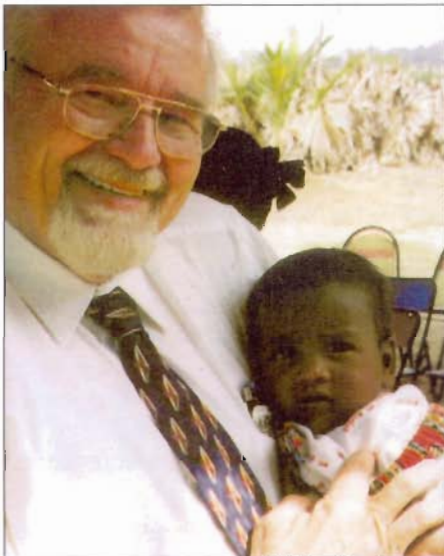
One of the churches of the AFLC-India. This is a typical size of building. Most are not constructed of concrete because of high cost.



Pastor Enderlein, Pastor Martin Luther Sastry and Dr. Monseth with he leaders of the Lanka Lutheran Church.



**Jerez, Mexico** — The missionary families the Dan Giles and the Todd Schierkolks are hosting 24 teens from Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy and their counselors for 10 days at the end of March. The group from the school in a suburb of Minneapolis sent students to Mexico two years ago. Last year they worked in Springfield, Missouri. The teens prepared puppet skits, mimes, and learned songs in Spanish before flying into Aguascalientes. They are scheduled to spend two days with the Spring of Living Water congregation before boarding a bus to Jerez.



Pastor Eugene Enderlein and the son of Pastor and Mrs. John Babu of India. Pastor Enderlein baptized the baby.



President of the AFLC of India, Pastor Martin Luther Sastry and his family.

**Fairbury, Nebraska** — The last Sunday of December 2000, Faith Lutheran celebrated its building debt retirement. The congregation was formed in 1987 by a number of individuals "stepping out in faith" who believed the Holy Scriptures are truly the inerrant and infallible Word of God. The first services were held in downtown storefront building. The church began building in 1989 and dedicated their facility in June 1991. Faith Lutheran now has 301 baptized members. Pictured at right are Kenneth Weichel, Interim Pastor Jerome Nikunen, Armin Daubendiek, and Norma Hansen. Pastor Nikunen continues to serve Abiding Word Lutheran in nearby Deshler.



**St. Louis, Missouri** — Gloria Dei Lutheran in St. Louis, Missouri is the latest addition to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The AFLC Coordinating Committee recently approved the congregation for affiliation.

Pastor Billy Secoy leads Gloria Dei, formerly an independent Lutheran congregation. The congregation, founded in 1998, presently meets at the Kennerly Elementary School in unincorporated South St. Louis County. It is located in a suburban area, fifteen miles south of downtown St. Louis.

Gloria Dei Lutheran is a small, but energetic and caring congregation, comprised of seventy-two members. The Sunday morning worship attendance averages fifty in number. It has a strong Sunday school

program, a vacation Bible School program, as well as several Bible study groups. They recently chartered their own Aid Association for Lutherans branch.

Gloria Dei is a strong supporter of missions in the St. Louis community and around the world. Once a month, the congregation leads a worship service at a local nursing home, bringing God's Word, sacrament, and music to the residents.

The people of Gloria Dei are excited about their recent inclusion in the AFLC. This is the first AFLC congregation in St. Louis. If travel ever takes one through St. Louis, all in the AFLC family are cordially invited to stop by and visit at Gloria Dei.

## People & Places



**Starbuck, Minnesota** — Pictured are the recent new members of Minnewaska Lutheran Church. The congregation is served by Pastor Todd Klemme, pictured far right.

**Aid Association for Lutherans** grants were recently given to the AFLC Parish Education Department. Under the Churchwide Grant Program, parish education was given \$2,250 to create a full-color catechism poster teaching guide to correlate with the currently available set of four Luther's Catechism in Illustration posters. The parish education director received \$1,725 to participate in a "Writing for the Church" workshop, sponsored by Concordia Publishing House. AAL also awarded a \$17,750 discretionary Lutheran grant to parish education to develop and produce Bible teaching cassettes and CDs for young children. These recordings will include Old and New Testament Bible stories, music, and memory verses correlating with the kindergarten and first grade Sunday school curriculum to use as education and evangelism tools in homes and churches.

**Anne Olson**, 83, passed away on January 22, 2001. She was a charter member of Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, North Dakota. Anne and her late husband Oscar, were strong supporters of the AFLC from its beginning years. She is remembered as a caregiver, companion and prayer warrior for many people in her community. She leaves six children, seventeen grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren.

Blessed by her memory.

**Ottawa, Illinois** — Faith Lutheran, along with the AFLC Commission on Evangelism, hosted the seminar "Fishing in the 21st Century" on March 9-10. Two workshop sessions with three presenters each were offered Saturday morning and afternoon. The seminar opened on Friday evening with an address by Pastor Warren Swanson, "The Competition Fishes Too!" Saturday's messages were given by district pastors: Steve Lombardo, Don Greven, and Kevin Garner. AFLC Director of Evangelism Jim Rasmussen will bring the seminar to Our Redeemer Lutheran in Kirkland, Washington, on April 28 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.



**Tucson, Arizona** — Living Faith Free Lutheran and Body of Christ Free Lutheran held a service of installation last fall for their new pastor, Rev. Fred Faughn. Pictured are AFLC President Robert Lee who officiated at the service, and Pastor Fred and Karen Faughn.

**Mercy and Truth Publications**, Osceola, Wisconsin, is being represented by Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minnesota, and Pastor Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, South Dakota. They are available to share a message on dealing with depression. Mercy and Truth Publishing is the ministry founded by Pastor Gerald Mundfrom. Pastor Gray is available to do a one-hour seminar on sexual abstinence, which includes a video by Pam Stenzel titled "True Love Waits."

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences (2 months) – January 1 - February 28, 2001

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$267,241.00	\$21,306.77	54,599.97	20
Seminary . . . . .	126,462.00	12,464.62	27,171.32	21
Bible School . . . . .	162,545.00	14,336.08	31,590.25	19
Home Missions. . . . .	242,838.00	19,991.14	45,821.51	19
World Missions. . . . .	206,762.00	14,488.83	38,187.78	18
Capital Investment . . . . .	9,490.00	466.81	1,353.35	14
Parish Education . . . . .	78,302.00	4,219.46	14,169.13	18
Church Extension . . . . .	26,119.00	1,590.62	2,840.18	11
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,119,759.00</b>	<b>88,864.33</b>	<b>215,733.49</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>TOTALS 2000 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,147,510.00</b>	<b>89,520.88</b>	<b>186,643.61</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Goal 17%</b>				



## The living God does great things

**F**or a few years my mother lived in an apartment above a mortuary and worked there part time. She would often get asked if it bothered her when there were dead bodies downstairs. Her reply was, "No dead person in the building has ever given me trouble, but the live ones who work here are sometimes a problem."

Corpses cause trouble in horror movies and people's imaginations, but in real life they are pretty harmless. Live bodies, though, can do a lot of good or cause a lot of trouble.

One who is alive can change their facial expressions. Their smile can spread, and so can their frown. A live person can share words that build a person up, or tear someone down. Life can lead to an encouraging touch or a painful blow. The dead body has to be cared for. The live one can care. The dead one is remembered. The one with life creates memories. When death reigns, there is only a past. Where life exists there is a present and a future.

That first Easter morning, some women went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid expecting to care for a corpse. They were greeted, though, with the question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5, 6, NIV). They were anticipating finding one they would work on. They found One who was alive and wanting to work in them.

At times it appears we would prefer to serve a god who isn't alive. A corpse can be controlled. We, at times, seem to want to control God. We think He should operate according to our plans. But God is not like some stuffed animal that goes wherever you drag it. He is not One we manipulate and mold. We are instead to ask Him to shape us according to His will. The living God says, "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, ... Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'" (Isaiah 45:9, NIV).

Something that has no life generally only makes noise or does something when you want it to. You pull it out, plug it in, turn it on; it does what it is suppose to do, and then you put it away till you need it again.

That unfortunately bears some resemblance to the type of relationship we at times seem to seek with God. When we need something we go to Him and expect Him to perform as we demand. When things

don't work the way we want we tell Him to fix it. We call for His blessing and protection when things look challenging. But at other times we would prefer that He keep quiet, stay out of the way and leave us alone.

God doesn't work that way. He is alive and active in this world. He works according to His plans and not always according to ours. He does not hide away until brought out for an appearance. He is the living and reigning Lord of the universe, who runs things in a very "hands-on" manner.

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

The dull side of a knife blade is like a dead body. It really can't do much. The Lord and His Word, however, are described as a double-edged sword. He can do much; more than any living being in this world.

For the one who tries to ignore God and run their own life, it is a discomforting warning to be told of how Jesus is living and active. But to the one aware of our helpless state, the one who knows their sinfulness and weakness, to the one seeking help it is the best news of all that Jesus is not a body in a tomb but the present and powerful Lord.

Because He is alive He can change things. How it is presently is not how it will always be. Because He is alive, we can have hope. Possibilities beyond our imagination exist. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NIV).

Death has been defeated. The living Lord reigns. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (I Corinthians 15:17, 20, NIV). It is God who is alive who makes it possible for us to say, "Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? ... But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:55, 57, NIV).

A dead god would be of little value. But the Lord Jesus who faced death, defeated it and lives and reigns today — O the great things He has done, is doing and will do for those who love and trust Him!

—Pastor Craig Johnson

**"Corpses  
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## BUILDING THE BASE

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# Interpreting the Bible correctly

**“B**e diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

The Church, during its history, has faced many struggles. Perhaps none has been as important as the one regarding how we should interpret the Bible. There have been three major modes of interpretation, which have brought about very different followings and results. These three modes or methods are still in practice. There is the thought that these methods are like ice cream, that is, one flavor is just as good as the other. But the truth is our method of biblical interpretation is either perfectly proper, or fatally flawed.

The Roman Catholic Church holds to a view of interpretation that could be characterized as the “traditional” method. To grossly oversimplify, when a passage of Scripture is in question, or there is a dispute as to the meaning, one defers the matter to the church. Those within the ruling body of the church become the final arbiters with regard to scriptural meaning and right interpretation. There is much room within this context for error, abuse and unrecoverable misinterpretation. The Lutheran Church began partly out of opposition to the abuses which sprang from this corrupted method of biblical interpretation.

There is another view that may be seen as an overreaction to the pitfalls of the traditional method, what some have called the “subjective” method of scriptural interpretation.

Within this popular view, it is up to the individual to determine what it is that a passage means. This view is characterized by phrases like, “I think it means ...” or “It may mean that for you, but I see another meaning which works just as well for me.” This understanding is all too common in our day. It can be seriously destructive, and it certainly doesn’t serve the Church or its mission.

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is (a matter) of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (II Peter 1:20-21). God is concerned regarding the sanctity of both the content and interpretation of the Scriptures, which He has given. It does not seem appropriate to leave biblical interpretation to either a powerful and fallible few, or a subjective committee-like decision of the masses.

Finally, there is what is known as the “analogy of Scripture,” the view or method which served as a proper reaction against the traditionalist method, yet falls short of the dangers of the overreaction by the subjectivist. The principal phrase of this view is “Let Scripture interpret Scripture.” The Bible itself, and not the church, or any person, is the final unerring judge as to what a certain passage means.

There are three basic rules which are simple, easy to remember, and must be followed. First, narrative passages of Scripture need to be interpreted in the light of teaching passages. Second, sections of Scripture which are obscure, or only

implicit in nature, must be interpreted by clearer and more explicit sections. Finally, common sense and laws of logic govern the interpretation of Scripture as they would the interpretation of any other book.

One last thing needs to be said with reference to our understanding of biblical interpretation, and that has to do with how many interpretations, or meanings each passage of Scripture has. In our post-modern age, it is widely believed that there is no objectivity in anything. This ridiculous philosophy has wormed its way into biblical interpretation as well.

In truth, we must understand that each passage of Scripture has only one true meaning that can be attached to it. There may be many practical applications made by any one passage, but there remains only one true interpretation of the passage itself. Asking what the passage means must be done prior to working out what the applications may be.

May God bless us as we look to His Word as our best guide for proper interpretation. May we ever be growing as well as we apply its clear meaning to our lives.



— *Pastor John Kent*  
*Rancho San Diego Lutheran*  
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