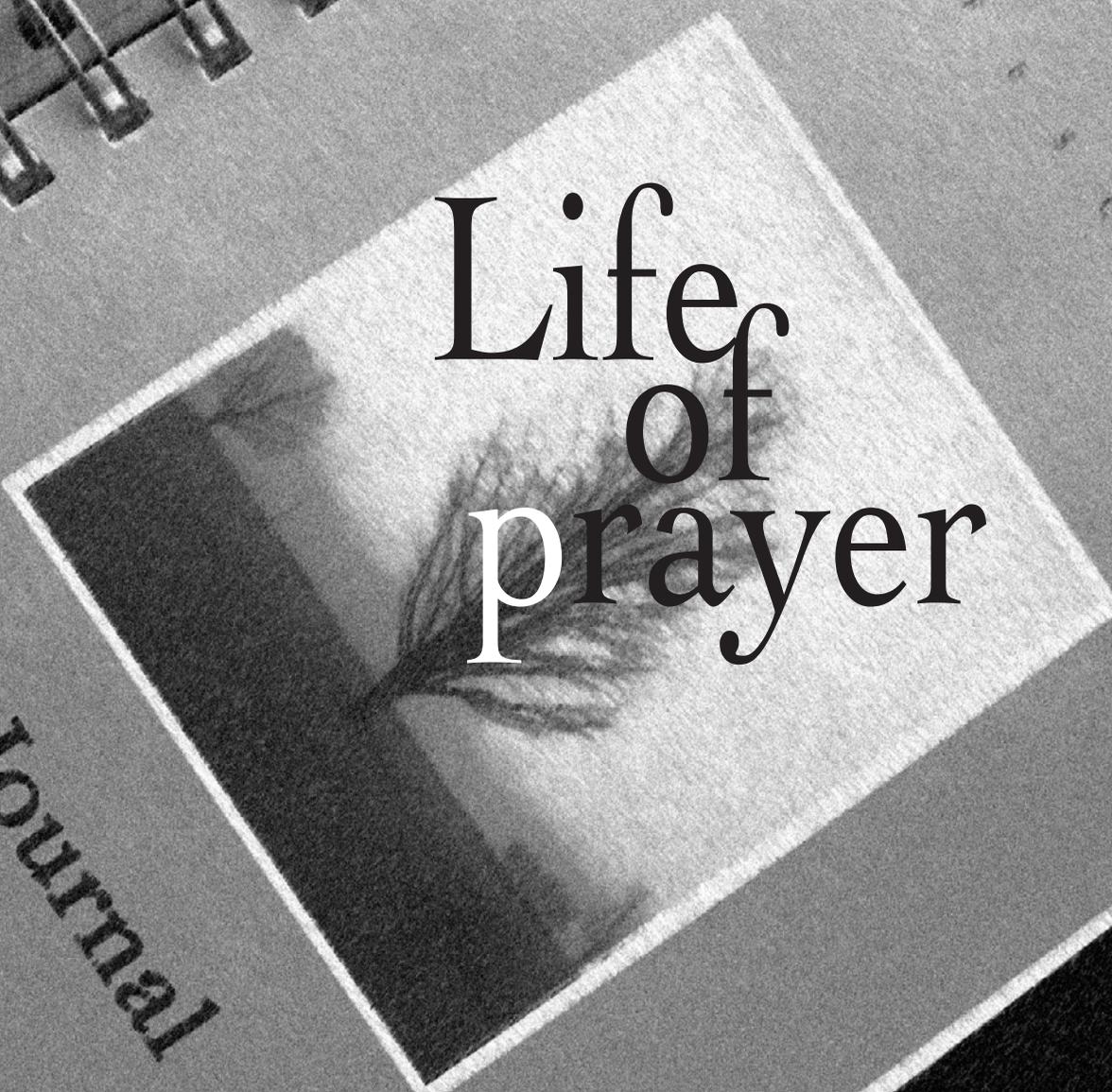


THE LUTHERAN   
**AMBASSADOR**

April 9, 2002



Life  
of  
prayer

Journal

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 21, 2002  
Volume 40, Number 7



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 763-545-5631

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**The Lutheran Ambassador**  
(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413)  
is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

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**Subscriptions rates:**  
\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U. S.  
\$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S.  
\$18.00 a year, International  
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN and additional mailing office.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441

## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Coming to our senses

Over the past few issues we've been exploring the five senses: hear, smell, taste, see and touch. We've learned that it is one thing to hear, and yet quite another thing to listen. We've asked ourselves, "What do we smell like? Is our spiritual perfume a pleasing aroma to God and to all those around us?" We've been invited to savor the taste of an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. We've been challenged to open our eyes and see the works of God, especially His work of forgiveness, mercy and grace. We've been warned of how sin can make us callous to the tender touch of Christ. And, hopefully, along this journey we've discovered ways to better appreciate the physical senses God has blessed us with.

I'd like us now to examine a sixth sense: the sense of humor. I Corinthians 15:34a says, "Come back to your senses as you ought." Some of you reading this may have lost one or more of your physical senses, and outside of a miracle, stand no chance of regaining that sense. That is not true with the sense of humor. If you've lost it, you can recapture it.

In the last six years I've purchased about ten Amtrak tickets. Each time I go to the depot to pick them up, I visit with Jack who prints out my tickets. Each time, I try to talk about something that might brighten his day or add some humor to it. Each time he remains super serious. No laugh. No smile. No grin. Nothing. Strictly business.

In contrast, each time I drive past a school playground, I see children

playing, laughing, running and thoroughly enjoying the moment. Charles Swindoll, in his book *Maybe It's Time To Laugh Again*, writes, "When did a healthy, well-exercised sense of humor get sacrificed on the altar of adulthood? Who says becoming a responsible adult means a long face and an all-serious attitude toward life?" Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Also, from Psalm 126:3, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."

I tell my kids, "Don't let today become the past without having some fun in it!" Every single moment in life does not have to be so serious. When did life stop being funny? Let yourself laugh again. Break the mold of predictability. Do something spontaneously fun or funny. Put on a cheerful countenance. Don't watch so much television. Instead, start reading things that will put a smile on

your face. Hang out or visit with friends who like to laugh. Proverbs 15:15b says, "...the cheerful heart has a continual feast." Start enjoying the banquet today by exercising your sense of humor.

In the next issue, we'll try to tie all these senses together as we look at one final sense: the sense of balance.



— Paul Kneeland  
Youth pastor  
Faith & Stillwater  
Free Lutheran  
Kalispell, Mont.

**If you've lost  
(your sense  
of humor),  
you can  
recapture it.**

# SOUND BITES

**T**oo much prayer is a thinly disguised attempt to promote an agenda that has no relation to the will of God and is often aimed at the human listener and not the divine ear.

— *A. W. Tozer*

**G**od save us from the people who would renew the church and bring justice in the world without praying. Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power, they are more dangerous than the wrongs they would set right.

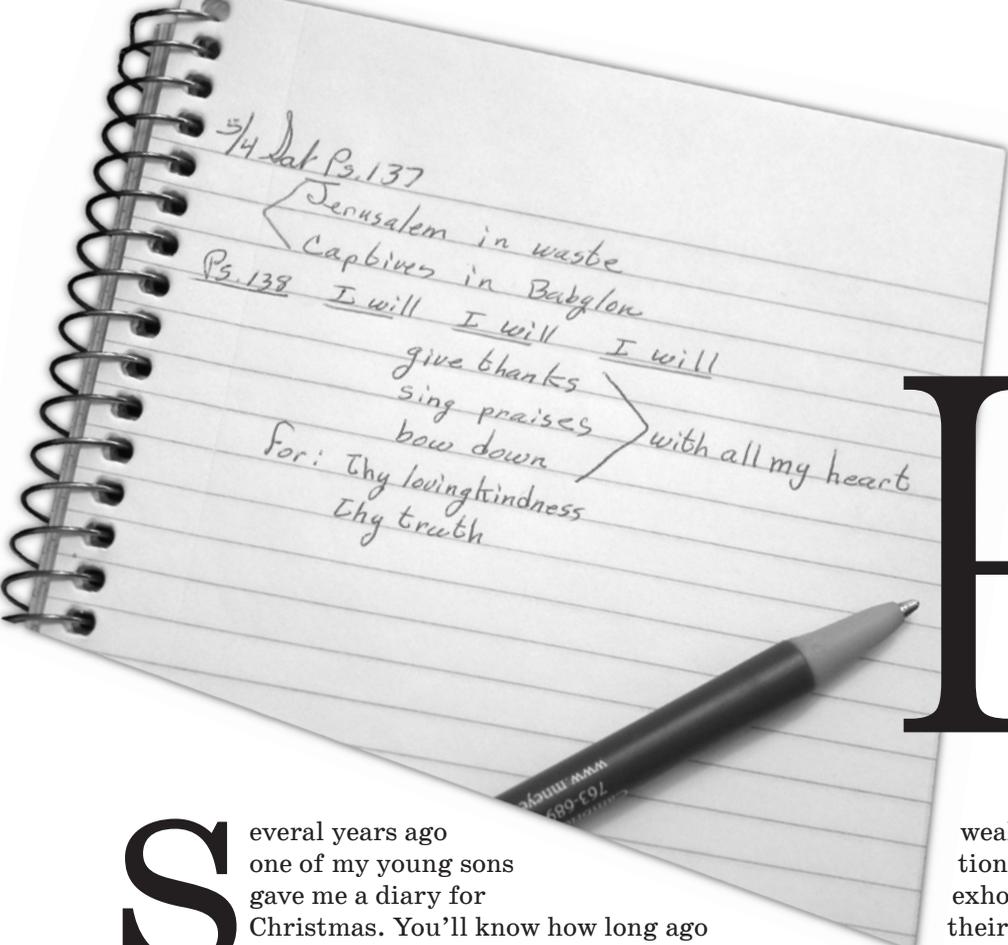
— *Ben Patterson*

**T**o pray is to let Jesus come into our hearts. ... it is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray. He knocks. Thereby He makes known His desire to come in to us. Our prayers are always a result of Jesus' knocking at our hearts' doors.

— *O. Hallesby*

**T**he best style of prayer is that which cannot be called anything else but a cry.

— *Charles Spurgeon*



# P Fresh, Vital Prayer

Several years ago one of my young sons gave me a diary for Christmas. You'll know how long ago when I tell you it has an "ET" on the cover, with a strange, whimsical creature riding a bicycle across the moon. Never having used a diary before, I placed it in a drawer with other little-used items.

More than a dozen years went by when one day, while hunting for something else, I came across the journal and determined to use it. Previous to that time I had filled the blank pages in my Bibles with jottings — personal responses to Scripture readings, answers to prayer, current feelings on motherhood, being a wife, etc. The one thought I had when I started such writings was that some day — someday after my death — my children would come to know me better. They would know, yes, even feel my mother's heart and how deeply they were loved.

Now here, in my extraterrestrial diary I had a perfect receptacle in which to express myself, in which to relate the heavenly blessings coming my way.

From that time these writings have developed more widely to include documenting requests to God for His blessings on activities, whether routine, unexpected, or, as just now completed, a planned vacation trip. There didn't seem to be much purpose in doing so unless giving an account of God's activities in response to my requests followed it up.

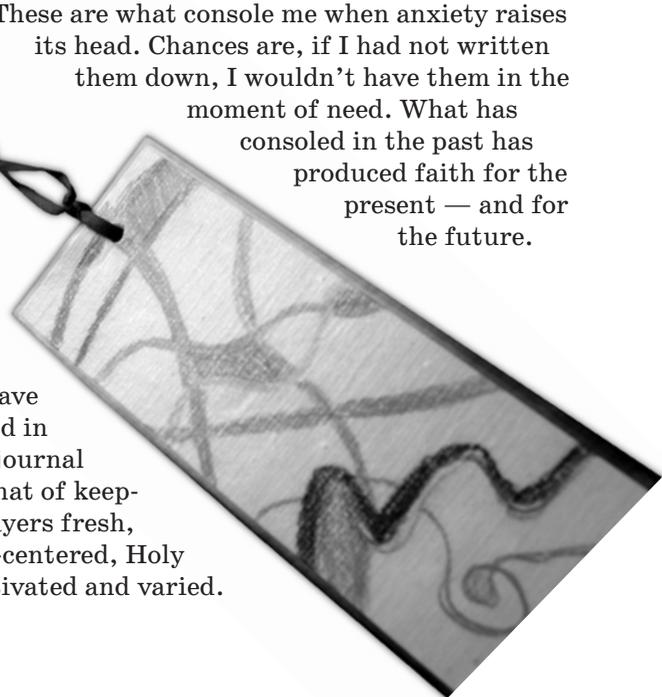
I had in mind two portions from Deuteronomy. First, from chapter eight, where God tells the Israelites that they should remember all the ways in which He had led them from Egypt to the Promised Land, His testings, His provisions, His victories, His intentions of bringing them into this good land, His gifts of power,

wealth, and physical strength. The second portion is in chapter six where the people are exhorted to have God's Word in their hearts, on their doorposts, their gates, their hands, their foreheads, teaching them diligently to their children and grandchildren so they would know that it was the Lord who performed these mighty deeds. Now MY children and grandchildren must know all of God's dealings with ME. They must know His answers to prayer; they must know my weaknesses and failures, my dependence on my Lord and His victories in my life.

In Psalm 94:19 the psalmist presents an important exercise: "When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolation delights my soul." Beside that verse I have jotted down several Bible references which the Lord has given me at different times of need.

These are what console me when anxiety raises its head. Chances are, if I had not written them down, I wouldn't have them in the moment of need. What has consoled in the past has produced faith for the present — and for the future.

The greatest benefit I have experienced in keeping a journal has been that of keeping my prayers fresh, vital, God-centered, Holy Spirit-motivated and varied.



Prayer is so personal, however. I hesitate to share my own methods and do so to encourage, not setting up a standard for anyone.

Like me, you have probably discovered God's delightful sense of timing in showing you something in Scripture just at the right moment of need. I had been feeling uneasy, lacking something in myself, when the Lord invited me, from Psalm 81, to "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." I realized that this principle of having my needs met through Scripture is the perfect premise for intercessory prayer. And so I began to use my daily portions as the basis for praying for others, as well as myself. Let me give you some examples. I have on my prayer list several young men for whom I have been praying. My normal prayer seemed to be so repetitious, a lot of time without passion, not the effective prayer that James speaks of (5:16). As years went by I almost felt it to be a weary effort. But, using my daily Bible reading, fitting my requests into each portion, I was encouraged that I was praying in God's will, prompted by the Holy Spirit. My praying changed from just petition to also thanking and praising God for each one. Journaling now meant writing down names in the margins by these verses and the dates.

My prayers for my children in their various stages of life became much more vital — exciting! Faced with independence, I prayed Psalm 131, that this child would "have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me." My prayer was that this young adult would not focus solely on personal gains and needs, but see the needs around. When once again this Psalm was my portion for the day, I noted the name written there and thanked God for His continued work in that life.

During the college years of another child, Paul's prayers in his epistles were the basis of my prayers — for growth, righteous living, steadfastness in Christian life, joy, thankfulness and perseverance. Those years being completed, it was a thankful mother's hand that wrote, "Thanks be to God" in her journal.

Exodus 31:1-6 and Nehemiah 2:18, portions telling of God directly gifting persons for His work, are prayed for our children in relation to their work, along with the request that He will broaden their borders. In pride and thankfulness I note their successes.

Oh, I could go on and on. Praying the prayers in

scripture for the churches we have been a part of, the verses to pray for discouraged pastors, tempted pastors, wayward sons, brokenhearted spouses, lonely people, broken families, serious illnesses, the lives and work of missionaries ... it's all there in the Bible.

Journaling my prayers in my Bible is the answer for me regarding praying for our nation, the president, the Mideast crisis, the terrorists, people and events that are not physically close to me. The Bible has it all. My prayers are not just generalities.

Yes, journaling definitely keeps me on task, helping me to stay focused. I need help to stay focused in lots of areas of my life. I was thinking of that when I turned

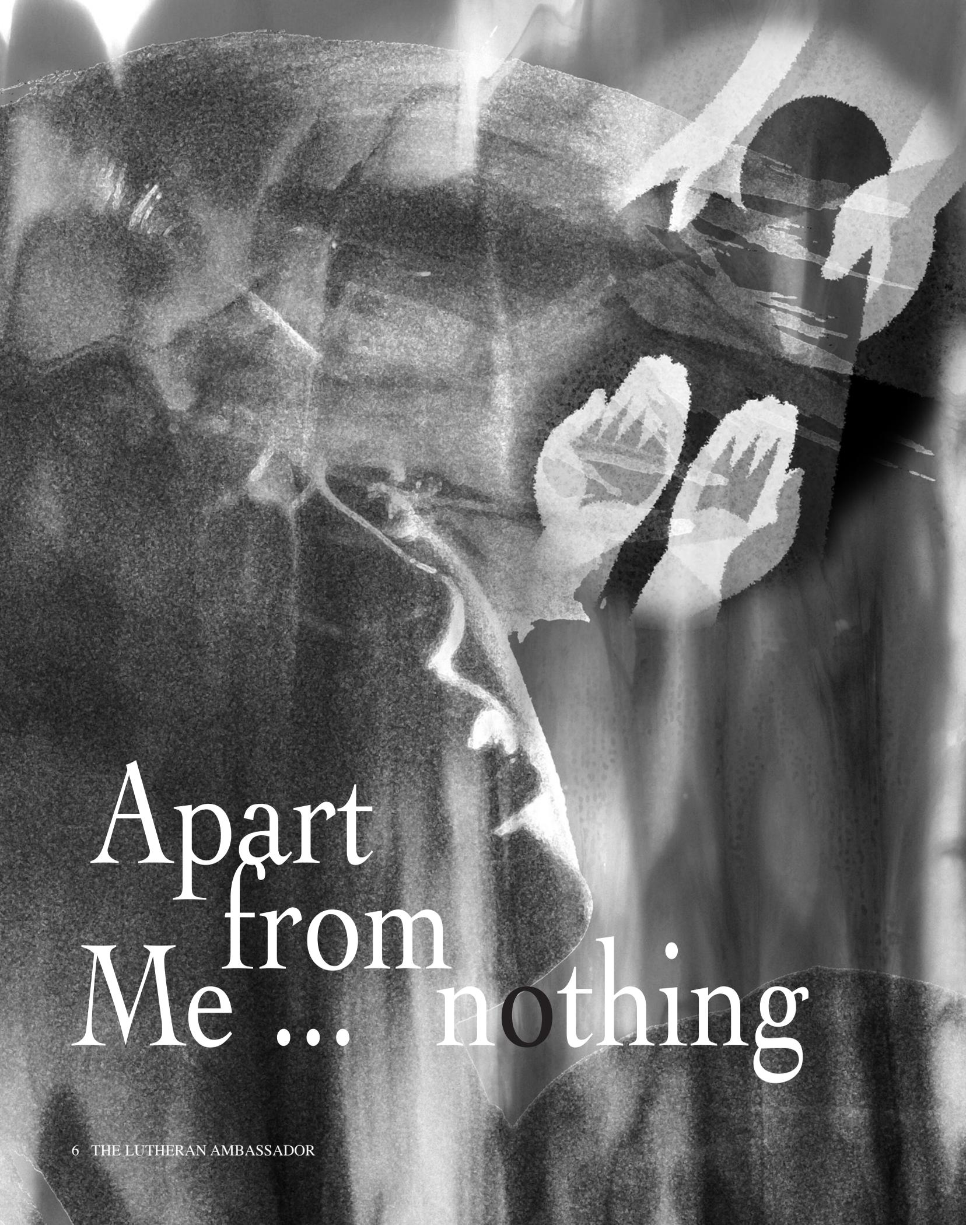


my exercise video on — many of these stretches could be done at any time of the day, even sitting while reading or watching TV. But, I forget. Without a prayer list, I forget. I forget to ask, I forget to thank and I forget to praise.

Having filled the pages of several journals since "ET," I have been blessed by documenting God's working in my life, of knowing the Bible as being His documenting, through many writers, of His dealings, His promises toward mankind — promises I can pray for myself, for you, for all He puts into my heart.

— *Clara Gunderson*  
*Cambridge, Minn.*





Apart  
from  
Me ... nothing

**I**n 1830, Charles Finney held a crusade in Rochester, N.Y. In his account of this event, Finney wrote about his prayer partner: “Abel Clary continued in prayer as long as I preached and did not leave the city until after I was done preaching. He never appeared in public, but gave himself wholly to prayer.” The result in Rochester was that, in one year’s time, 1,000 of the 10,000 inhabitants came to faith in Christ.

What is prayer? Prayer is acknowledging to God that I cannot do it on my own. Prayer is calling out to God in complete helplessness. Prayer is realizing that *I* cannot do it. I need God to make it through every minute of every day. Prayer is acknowledging that God is the author of everything good. He is the giver of *everything*. He is all powerful. He possesses all knowledge and knows what is best for me and everyone I pray for. Ole Hallesby, in his book, “Prayer,” writes, “Helplessness united with faith produces prayer.”

Why is prayer the key to evangelism? No work done for God’s kingdom will last for eternity unless God Himself does the work. We need to plead with Him to do this work in the hearts of all people. “(God) wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). The lost can only know the truth by hearing God’s Word, and then God can do His saving work.

The Word of God, which is absolute truth, tells us that God does the work of saving the lost. In John 15:5, Jesus tells us, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” If we are not in constant communication with God through Jesus we will not see our need for the Savior or His power to work through us.

A tremendous battle is going on today. The battle for souls is fought in unseen places, in the heavenlies. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, “Our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” The battle for the lost is won in prayer. The only way the lost will be saved is through sharing the law in its harshness and the gospel in all its sweetness, praying that God will do the work of salvation in the hearts of the hearers.

The work of prayer can be likened to the work of bombers in wartime. They drop big bombs on enemy targets to soften resistance. Then, at the right time, the ground troops come in and take possession of the territory. Prayers are like the bombs. The Holy Spirit hears our pleas for the lost

and does the work of softening up their hearts. When the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared, hearts are prepared. The Holy Spirit speaks to the lost, telling them that the time has come. When the gospel call — “Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 28:11) — reaches the lost, they surrender their souls and say, “Yes, I want that rest.” As the Holy Spirit sees our helplessness and faith, He comes to soften hearts, giving unbelievers the ability to say yes to the gospel and to Jesus.

Dear friends, evangelism cannot be separated from prayer. It is essential to spend months in prayer before you hold any kind of harvest event. As we plead with God for the Holy Spirit to come and soften the hearts of the lost, He sees our helplessness and creates openness to the gospel by His own power. Then the lost, softened by the Spirit to hear the gospel call, are ready to say yes to the invitation of Christ.

Prayer is the key. Use it. Recognize your inability to do anything on your own. Realize that the salvation of souls is, first to last, the work of the Holy Spirit as He intercedes for us. He hears our cries for His help in the battle for the millions of lost souls in our nation and world.

Please do not use prayer as a reason not to share Jesus verbally. We are called to open our mouths and share the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Will you pray that you will be a bold witness? Are you ready to answer the question, “Why are you different?” I Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always** being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

## Praying for evangelism



— *Pastor Jim Rasmussen*  
*Director of Evangelism*



“**I** give up!” It’s the cry of frustration at seeing well-intentioned prayers unanswered. It’s the cry of a man who doesn’t see any fruit from the hours spent on his knees, interceding for others. It’s so easy to get discouraged and think that God doesn’t seem to hear or care about what we say. But if we have come to that point, when we have questions and doubts, it’s a hint that we need to persevere and dig even deeper in our prayer life. Here are some specific guidelines that can help us when prayer isn’t answered.

### **Unconfessed sin breaks communication with God**

Sometimes, we pray and pray but in reality we are in secret rebellion against God. Why then should we expect any answer unless it’s a prayer of confession? As it says in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.”

In the Hebrides revival of the 1950s, a group of dedicated believers were praying for revival for five months three nights a week. Nothing happened until the moment Psalm 24:3-5 was read and they

began confessing their *own* sins. Then the revival broke out all over the country.

Sin is a real barrier in our connection with the Lord. We need to be transparent before Him like glass instead of hiding secret sins

and passions. When prayers aren’t answered, we must dig deeper in our souls, pouring ourselves out before God, certain that first our relationship with God is clear. Are we open before Him?

### **Prayer must bring glory to God**

This is the Lord’s aim. “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Sometimes, we think the answer to our prayer is obviously one in which God will be glorified. But at times God will allow us to experience difficulties or problems in order to accomplish His purposes. We don’t always see that or know what God is doing through this unanswered prayer, but we just have to surrender up our concerns to Him and trust that as the good Father, He knows best and will use it for His glory.

At other times we seem to be praying to bring glory to God, but in reality, we are seeking simply to please our flesh. In that case, our prayers will also fall unanswered: “You ask and do not receive,

because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). The goal of the Lord is not that we grow in the flesh, but that we grow in the spirit and, thus, bring Him more glory. As it says in Romans, “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

### **People we pray for can resist the Lord**

We know it’s God’s will for all men to be saved. It’s God’s will for us to study His Word, to follow Him, to bear fruit, etc. We pray for friends, relatives and acquaintances so that they will know Jesus as their Lord, bear fruit and become Christ-like. But not everyone is willing to listen to the leading of God’s Spirit. They can resist.

Last year I prayed specifically for 10 students to study at our Bible school in Poland. I was convinced that God would open doors for those people. But when the day for interviews came, there were only four students. I was devastated — what happened to the other six? Maybe God had other plans for them, maybe it was better to have only four, but certainly there was resistance to the leading of the Spirit as well.

Although we can pray day and night for our friends or relatives to be saved, or for spiritual growth, God will not force them to surrender to His will. As Pharaoh hardened his heart to God, they, too, can harden their hearts to His plans.

### **God wants us to persevere in prayer**

When those prayers don’t seem to change anything, should we just give up? No! That is the time in which we need to persevere even more for those people who are resisting God. There is a great spiritual battle for the soul, and through our prayers God can cause circumstances to change that break people’s will, bringing them to surrender.

Scripture reminds us to persevere in prayer for others and to continue to be alert to the needs around us (Ephesians 6:18). Despite the lack of change, we need to be striving for the needs — especially the spiritual needs — of those around us. We must remember that there are certain people for whom God has put on our hearts to pray. It’s possible that no one else will bring them before the Lord in prayer. But God has given you that burden — that is the leading of the Holy Spirit. Persevere in prayer! God wants to use you to reach them.

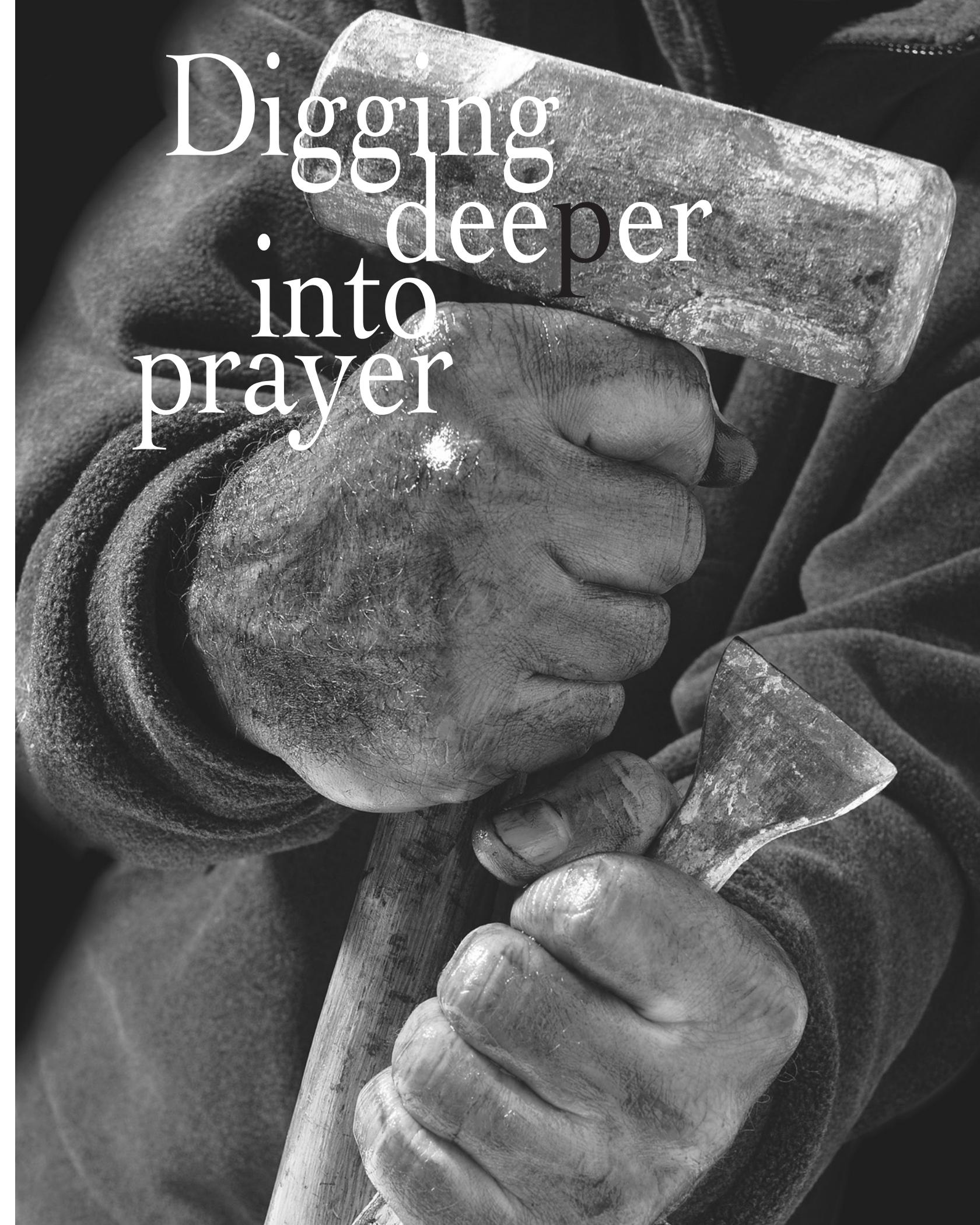
Finally, we know that if we are praying according to God’s will in His Word — it will have results.

The Lord says concerning His Word: “It shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

— *Pastor Tim Hinrichs*  
*AFLC Missionary*  
*Dziegielow, Poland*

# When my prayer isn’t answered



A black and white photograph showing a close-up of a person's hands. The left hand is firmly gripping a hammer, while the right hand holds an axe. The person is wearing a dark, textured jacket. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on the image is the text "Digging deeper into prayer" in a white, serif font. The word "Digging" is on the top line, "deeper" is on the second line, "into" is on the third line, and "prayer" is on the fourth line. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image.

Digging  
deeper  
into  
prayer

# a Lifetime of prayer

**A**s the chaplain of a 200-bed nursing home, I asked the residents what prayer means to them. Most of them said prayer meant everything. “Prayer is talking to God. He’s my everything,” said Marian, a Lutheran.

Leona, who is also a Lutheran, said that she prays to God to help her walk with Him and that He would help other people. When I came to Leona with the news that her former roommate had passed away, her comment to me was, “God knows best.”

Many times, I think that we get away from the simple fact that our lives are in God’s hands, and He does know what is best for us. We sometimes don’t always like or understand the way things take place, but our faith in God keeps us going because we know God knows best. Lamentations 3:22-23 says, “... His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.”

Pearl, a Baptist, said that she “goes to God all the time. He knows everything. He knows what I need and what I don’t need.” She commits the things that are on her heart into the hands of the Lord, and she trusts His answers to her.

Iva, a Presbyterian, said that she “can’t live without prayer.” She talks to God all the time, and she prays for the salvation of her family. She is thankful because she believes her whole family is saved. “At my age,” she said, “I pray all the time that God will keep me going.”

It’s obvious that prayer plays an important part in the lives of our residents. Prayer affects their attitudes as they age. Faith in God gives them something to look forward to each and every day.

“America is in such a mess,” said Pearl. “We need His forgiveness. Jesus is coming again.”

It is obvious where Pearl’s hope lives. God’s Word promises us that He will cause all things to work together for good to those who love Him, for those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Each morning that I’m at Pleasant View Luther Home, I lead everyone there in devotions and prayer. This is a special time for many. And many residents

have their own personal time of prayer as they begin their day. Elva, a Lutheran, has three devotionals and starts each morning with prayer. “I ask God to help me be the Christian person that He wants me to be,” she said.

Philippians 4:6-7 says that we are to “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Mary, a Catholic, said that we always need to thank God in our prayers. “We don’t want to be like the 10 lepers whom Jesus healed and only one came back to thank Jesus.”

Prayer can be a special time when we come away from the rat race of our world. Mickey, a Presbyterian, said, “Prayer is a relaxing time where I put my whole thought into it rather than having other things run through my mind ... It’s something we always did at home.”

There are many times in the Bible where Jesus instructed His disciples to come away and spend some quiet time with Him. God wants to bless us as His children, if we will only stop and take time to pray, committing the coming day into His hands and rest upon His promises.

Prayer is a great ministry that knows no age, limitations or boundaries. In Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.”

If you have something you want prayer support for, go to a nursing home and you will find prayer warriors who will lift you up in prayer. To them, prayer is everything. Prayer is their answer in every situation. Is it yours?

— *Pastor Kerwin Sletto*  
*Chaplain*  
*Pleasant View Luther Home*  
*Ottawa, Ill.*



# Find time to pray



**M**innesota state legislators recently declared “Grace” the state picture. The scene is an old bearded man, hands raised and folded at a table, Bible before him, and his head bowed reverently. This is a wonderful way to come before our God. Intentional. No distractions of the world. With the Bible before us in prayer, interaction takes place. It’s not just us talking. God speaks to us through His Word. Enlightens us. Directs us. Comforts us. Empowers us. Prayer journals can be added at the table. As we write, we remain focused and we then have a more clear and recorded message of what God is stirring around in our minds.

However, this is not the only picture of prayer. Ephesians 6:18 says, “Pray in the spirit in all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Because our God is ever-present, we can call on Him, whenever, wherever, in the spirit, and He hears us. Many people speak about having their prayer time in the car to and from work. Eyes open, fully aware of surroundings, praising Him for all that is seen, interceding for those brought to mind, and having fellowship with Him.

Our family tradition is to pray as we drive to church. It has helped our children, even when they were small, to remember what the focus is as we gather to worship. The 20-minute drive is a concert of prayer as each person takes a turn to pray out loud. It is understood that while one is praying, others are listening and offering prayers of agreement. We praise Him, thank Him that we can gather to freely worship. We pray for the pastor and his message, Sunday school teachers, for receptive ears and hearts, and that non-Christians would come and be ministered to.

As a little girl, I thought that to pray I had to have my head bowed and hands folded. This works great in Sunday school as it helps to keep kids focused. As I’ve grown-up, I’m praying more with my eyes open and my hands extended. I find myself praying for the checkout clerk as I pay her, for the neighbors as I speak with them, or the varied tasks that I find myself involved with. I pray as I scan a scene of chaos, asking God to take hold of it. Words are not

audible, but the heart line is connected to

God, praying in the spirit. This is where the relationship with God is: communing with Him in prayer during the entire course of the day. He doesn’t leave me. He’s with me, ever-present.

A time of prayer and fasting can be very intense. When I pray on a full tummy, I can become a little sleepy, much like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, when the food is absent from my system, I’m alert. Ready to do spiritual battle. A prayer warrior. Every time my stomach churns, growls, or yearns for more, it is my cue to cry out to God, to intercede for the cause. I find the more hungry I become, the more intense and passionate my prayers become. In my hunger, I see my humanity and my complete need of a God full of infinite wisdom, power and provision. As I line up under His authority, I plead for Him to move His loving hand.

Is unanswered prayer, really “unanswered?” The 2002 ARC theme, P.U.S.H: “Pray Until Something Happens,” carries the reminder to be persistent in prayer. Knocking, ever knocking, at God’s door. Waiting expectantly for “something to happen.” Sometimes we might claim, in our feebleness, that our prayers are unanswered when answered prayer is not obvious to us. I believe God does not always answer in the way we would expect. We need to pray for eyes to see His answers. Through fervent prayer, many times He changes my heart, and I start to see His ways rather than mine. That is the “Pray Until Something Happens” that God desires — the change of heart.

The ARC will be hosting a prayer retreat August 30-31. It is our hope that prayer warriors across the AFLC will come together in fervent prayers of agreement. There will be a time of praise and testimony of God’s goodness. There will be specific hours spent in prayer led by various people: prayers for repentance, for the church and its mission, the nation, for marriages and families, and for youth and schools. This will be a time to unite under the throne of grace. You will leave refreshed and strengthened.

— Pam Olson  
ARC program director

# Brazil: MTI students report on ministry

Top: May Britt Garvik (left) and Kim Matt (right) visit a Brazilian family at home. Bottom: Brazilian youths get together and praise God on Saturday nights.

Two days a week Kim and I work at a farm called Amecam. It's a place where former street kids, who have been involved in different kinds of crimes, come to work and to study.

They start the day with breakfast and devotions. The kids are very nice. About 40 percent of them have Christ in their hearts. Most of the time, we're socializing with them, playing volleyball, helping with cleaning and so on. They have school in the afternoon and there is also an opportunity to learn how to bake bread, play the guitar and cut hair.

I think this is a wonderful opportunity. The kids get to hear the gospel while getting an education and sufficient food. God takes care of everything. "Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7).

— *May Britt Garvik*

Being in Brazil has taught me three very important lessons. If you had the opportunity to be in a third world country like me, would it affect you only while you were there, or so much that your attitude and view on life change? As I begin to think about coming home I hope that I will be able to keep these lessons with me. Coming back to the comforts of life will be the test.

In the eyes of the Brazilians, I'm a queen because I'm able to travel, which brings me to the first lesson: humility. Coming from a not-so-wealthy family, I know what it's like to go without. But I had no concept of humility. Seeing how this particular culture lives has brought ultimate humility. We are so blessed to have the things we do.



There are two extremes here, very rich and very poor. We have the privilege to be with the poor, those who live on something barely stable. But these people are so quick to give of their time, of their possessions, of themselves. And this is the second lesson. If you had the chance to give of yourself, your time, even your resources, your efforts, how much would you hold back?

I never carry cash on me, but one day I really needed it. A group of students walked downtown and a couple of them offered to pay for my ice cream treat. It's not a big deal, 20 cents is all, but they were so quick to offer from what they had. No questions asked. They would give their all to make someone happy.

The last lesson I'm learning is to

be content. Today's society says, "More, more, more." When Paul says, "I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need," I believe it relates to third world countries — those who go without. I have found that the people here are happy and content with what they have. I have realized that I take things for granted, like a hot shower or a bed that doesn't fold or simply being comfortable.

I may not be in my comfort zone now, but being in the presence of very poor people has shown me that it's OK to have less, maybe even nothing. The Lord is still working on me, completing me until the day of perfection.

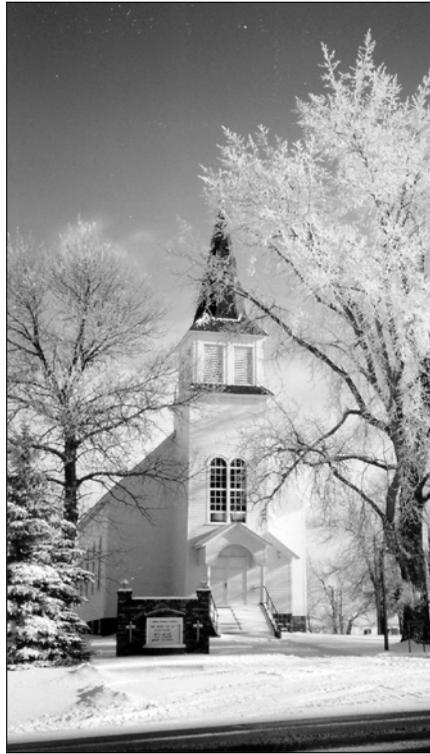
— *Kim Matt*

## Dickinson congregation to celebrate 25th anniversary

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Dickinson, N.D., will celebrate its 25th anniversary August 17 and 18.

Preliminary planning of activities include a program Saturday evening with a time of praise singing, a short program by God's Mighty Handful (puppets), a time of sharing and fellowship. Sunday activities include regular morning worship service at 9:30 a.m. with AFLC President Pastor Bob Lee giving the message. Following the worship service there will be a time for fellowship. The afternoon service will begin at 2 p.m.

All are welcome to attend. For more information, please call the church office at 701-227-1652 or e-mail Our Saviour's Lutheran Church at [oslc@pop.ctctel.com](mailto:oslc@pop.ctctel.com).



## Grong Free Lutheran to celebrate 130 years

Members of Grong Free Lutheran, Rollag, Minn., will celebrate the congregation's 130th anniversary on June 30.

Pastor Bernard Hagebo, who served Grong and other congregations until 1885, organized the congregation Sept. 27, 1872. The congregation was first called Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran. In 1877, two acres of land were purchased for \$20, where the current church building was built in 1881-2. The church is now served by Pastor Gary Simons

The congregation will host the celebration with a 10 a.m. morning service, including special music. A catered noon meal and fellowship will follow the service.

**Pastor Dennis Gray**, Newfolden, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Minnewauken, N.D., and Christ Free Lutheran Church, Devil's Lake, N.D. April 1 was the official date for the beginning of his ministry in the parish, although he has served as interim pastor there for several months.

**Pastor Gary Skramstad**, St. Cloud, Minn., was featured in an article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* on April 14 for his efforts to promote prostate cancer awareness in Minnesota. Currently serving as chaplain of a retirement community at Sartell, Minn., Skramstad also heads a state prostate cancer awareness coalition.

**Pastor Edward Strom**, Kenyon, Minn., has resigned as pastor of Hauge and Emmanuel Lutheran churches, where he has served for the past four and one-half years, to accept a call from Triumph

Lutheran Brethren Church, Moorhead, Minn., as congregational care pastor. His ministry in Kenyon will conclude on May 31.

**Eric Christianson**, Richfield, Minn., has been called to serve as the full-time youth worker for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Zumbrota, Minn. Christianson, who is married to Andrea (Nelson), is originally from Fergus Falls, Minn., and a graduate of AFLBS.

**Living Faith and Body of Christ Free Lutheran** churches, Tucson, Ariz., voted to merge. Living Faith, established in 1982, is in the process of selling their building to a Spanish-speaking congregation currently renting the facility. The new congregation plans to purchase land in an east Tucson subdivision. Pastor Warren Swanson serves the parish.

**Pastor Jerome Nikunen** has resigned as pastor of Abiding Word Free Lutheran, Deshler, Neb., where he has served for more than three

years and has accepted a call to become the first pastor of the newly organized home mission church Faith Free Lutheran, Bertrand, Neb. He will take up his new work as of June 1. Abiding Word has mothered this new congregation, and Pastor Nikunen has served as its interim pastor for the past nine months.

**Living Hope**, a new church plant in St. Michael, Minn., will begin meeting at 10:30 a.m. Sunday mornings beginning June 2. The congregation meets in the cafeteria of St. Michael/Albertville Middle School. The congregation's official launch to the community is set for Sept. 15.

**Medicine Lake Lutheran Church**, Plymouth, Minn., will officially change its name to Grace Free Lutheran as of June 1. The mailing address will remain the same until the new building is complete in Maple Grove, Minn.

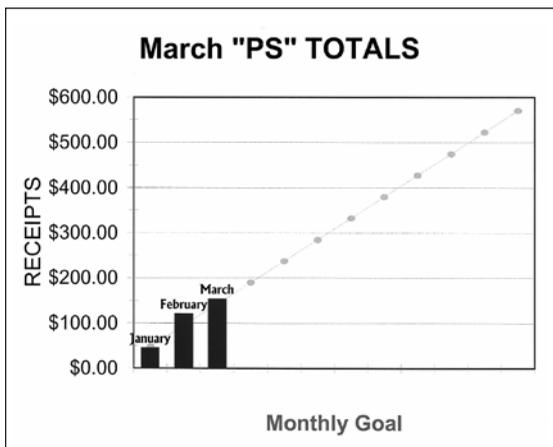
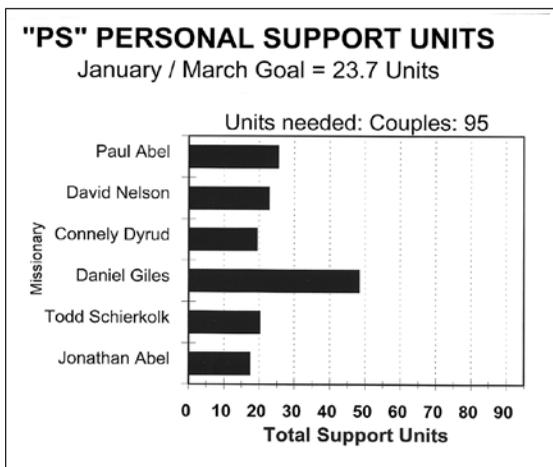
## New Web site for Pickerel Lake camp

Pickerel Lake Lutheran Bible Camp email address and Web site are now online. The first issue of the "What's Happening at Pickerel Lake" news flier can be viewed online at [www.itctel.com/mnmp/pickerel-lake/index](http://www.itctel.com/mnmp/pickerel-lake/index).

The Web address [www.pickerellake.net](http://www.pickerellake.net) has been acquired. That address will forward your Web browser to the Pickerel Lake site.

A "net" visual theme is being developed for the news flier and Web site consistent not only with the biblical theme of "fishers of men" and the name of the camp (a pickerel is, of course, a fish!), but also with the .net endings on the addresses.

Contact Pastor Michael Peterson ([mnmp@itctel.com](mailto:mnmp@itctel.com)) to be placed on the email list.



# AFLC Memorials

## April 2002

### Department given to ...

*In memory of...*

#### Vision 2004

*Clara Smedshammer  
Arthur Synstelién  
Helen Overland  
Lucille Abskar  
Rev. Lawrence Dynneson  
Mary Boettcher  
Marie Schlenk  
Arnold Haugen  
Lillian Westlund  
Myrtle Johnson  
Henry Rud  
Agnes Jensen  
Marie Jorgenson*

#### Home Missions

*Betty Samuelson  
Mary Monson  
Arnold Haugen  
Mrs. Mitterling  
Dominick Petschl*

#### AFLBS

*Marie Schlenk  
Arnold Haugen  
Arthur Larson*

### AFLTS

*Ole Borseth  
Elsie Elkins  
Arnold Haugen*

#### Church Extension

*Nelene Hiepler Fox*

#### World Missions

*Betty Samuelson  
Corrine Klein  
Arnold Haugen  
Rev. Lawrence Dynneson  
Nels Flom*

#### Youth Ministries

*Eric Manus*

#### Miriam Infant Home

*Dominick Petschl*

*In honor of ...*

#### Vision 2004

*Gerald and Karen  
Knudsvig  
Mr. and Mrs. Rick*

*Noreen*

#### Home Missions

*Rev. Vince Will's ministry*

*try*

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences (3 months) – January 1 - April 30, 2002

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$268,060.00	\$22,361.12	\$81,994.33	31
Seminary . . . . .	118,938.00	13,153.44	56,526.15	48
Bible School . . . . .	217,227.00	34,565.80	99,145.84	46
Home Missions. . . . .	278,872.00	17,126.72	68,058.79	24
World Missions. . . . .	199,994.00	17,480.38	79,186.61	40
Personal Support . . . . .	288,000.00	31,903.88	122,891.56	43
Youth Ministries . . . . .	55,413.00	2,487.76	15,326.03	28
Parish Education . . . . .	71,687.00	3,761.62	17,158.78	24
Church Extension . . . . .	23,093.00	3,157.54	10,566.32	46
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,521,284.00</b>	<b>\$145,998.26</b>	<b>\$550,854.41</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTALS 2001 . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,119,759.00</b>	<b>\$86,041.48</b>	<b>\$397,661.44</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Goal 33%</b>				

The Evangelism Department received \$4,936.26 in April.

## Prayer starts on the inside

**P**astor John Strand, the first president of the AFLC, told of a lady who felt uncomfortable praying out loud in a group. His counsel to her was to not worry about it. He pointed her to Matthew 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” He advised her to concentrate on her private prayer life and not be concerned about whether or not she could pray in public. After some time Pastor Strand talked with her again and she told him how she had followed his advice. She focused her time and energy on her private prayer life. After some time went by of doing that, she was pleasantly surprised to discover she felt rather comfortable praying in public.

When she focused first on her inner prayer life, the outward difficulties, in time, were overcome. Growing in prayer is something that happens from the inside out.

The religious leaders and teachers of the law in Jesus’ day were great at public prayer. But Jesus said, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5, NIV). Their prayer life was just a show. They wanted others to notice they were praying, but they weren’t really concerned as to whether or not they were truly communicating with God.

It can be tempting, when praying out loud, to spend much time worrying about the people listening, and giving little thought to what God thinks. That is the opposite of how it should be. Prayer is first of all talking with God. At times we let others listen in, but still our attention is to be on the Lord.

Before someone starts praying in public, they need to be praying in private. Public prayer can be an encouragement to those listening. It can be an aid in helping others in their prayer life. But it serves this purpose only when the public prayer flows out of a healthy private prayer life.

Focusing first on what is going on inside applies to our congregations as well. In his book, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala writes: “Am I the only one

who gets embarrassed when religious leaders in America talk about having prayer in public schools? We don’t have even that much prayer in many churches! Out of humility, you would think we would keep quiet on that particular subject until we practice what we preach in our own congregations.

“I am sure that the Roman emperors didn’t have prayer to God in their schools. But then, the early Christians didn’t seem to care what Caligula or Claudius or Nero did. How could any emperor stop God? How, in fact, could the demons of hell make headway when God’s people prayed and called upon his name? Impossible! ... Let’s not play games with ourselves. Let’s not divert attention away from the weak prayer life of our own churches.”

**Before someone starts praying in public, they need to be praying in private.**

It is hypocritical for Christians to clamor for prayer to go on in the public schools if prayer is not happening in our churches. We must ask ourselves, are some of the problems in our schools and society the result of a lack of prayer in schools, or are they more likely the result of a lack of prayer in our churches? Let us be sure we are praying for the schools before we go asking for prayer in the schools.

Diligent private prayer can result in great things happening in the public arena. Changes can be seen if there is first much unseen prayer. The needs are too great; the challenges are too difficult for us to handle on our own. But they are not too much for God. So we must go to Him.

Jesus, in His death on the cross, has opened the way so that we can approach the King of all kings and bring to Him our joys and our sorrows, our thanksgiving and our needs, and know that He listens. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ... let us draw near to God” (Hebrews 10:19, 22).

No matter if we are able to or allowed to pray in public, we can always go to God in private prayer, when we are going through faith in Christ. That time, of the child of God talking with his Father in prayer, is a time of great power and privilege. It is during those times, and times when small groups of Christians get together to pray, that the Almighty God listens and acts and lives are changed for all eternity.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

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## BUILDING THE BASE

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# Baseball and the Christian life

**B**aseball has been described as a slow and tedious game. There are long pauses in the action when nothing seems to be happening — between pitches when players gather at the mound for a strategy session or between innings, etc. There are no rules governing its length in terms of time. A game is never ended because the clock runs out. No team is declared the winner until all nine innings have been played. A typical game can be finished in less than two hours, or drag on for three or four hours. As Yogi Berra, the famous New York Yankees catcher (known as much for his unique expressions as his clutch hitting) was quoted as saying, “It ain’t over ’till it’s over.”

Some people have been critical of baseball for this very reason. “The games last too long,” they say. It’s as if the pace of play is too slow for today’s instant world. Many people have called for baseball to make changes in the way games are played

in order to speed it up.

I enjoy baseball for the very reason others criticize it. It is a game for the mind, as well as the muscle. It is a game of finesse and strategy, as well as power and speed. When opposing teams and their managers

engage in a contest of mental gymnastics — changing pitchers, sending in pinch hitters and runners, pitchouts and attempted steals, bunts and the hit-and-run — that is when baseball becomes intriguing and exciting. It is time consuming, but it is exactly what makes baseball my favorite sport.

In some ways, baseball reminds me of the

Christian life — how God works. In Jesus’ words, Christian growth is like a seed planted in soil. It is a slow and tedious process. It is a quiet and often invisible work. Many times it appears as if nothing is happening — as if no growth is taking place. But, like the game of baseball, the action is behind the scenes.

God’s Word is working gradual but lasting changes in people. His

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**God’s Word  
is working  
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lasting  
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people.**

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Word is working to soften hardened hearts and overcome past sins. Growth is occurring slowly, but surely, though the progress is not readily observed. Only by looking back over several months, or years, can change be detected.

The Christian life “ain’t over ’till it’s over.” Change and growth will occur until the very end. Believers never reach perfection, or attain maturity, until the last out in the ninth inning, when God declares that our work on earth is over and death ushers us into the presence of our Savior in heaven.

To fully appreciate the game of baseball, you need a willingness to slow down and take in the whole picture. Appreciating what takes place in the life of an individual Christian requires that we look at the whole picture, too, from beginning to end.

— *Pastor John  
Mundfrom  
Spencer Creek  
Lutheran  
Eugene, Ore.*

