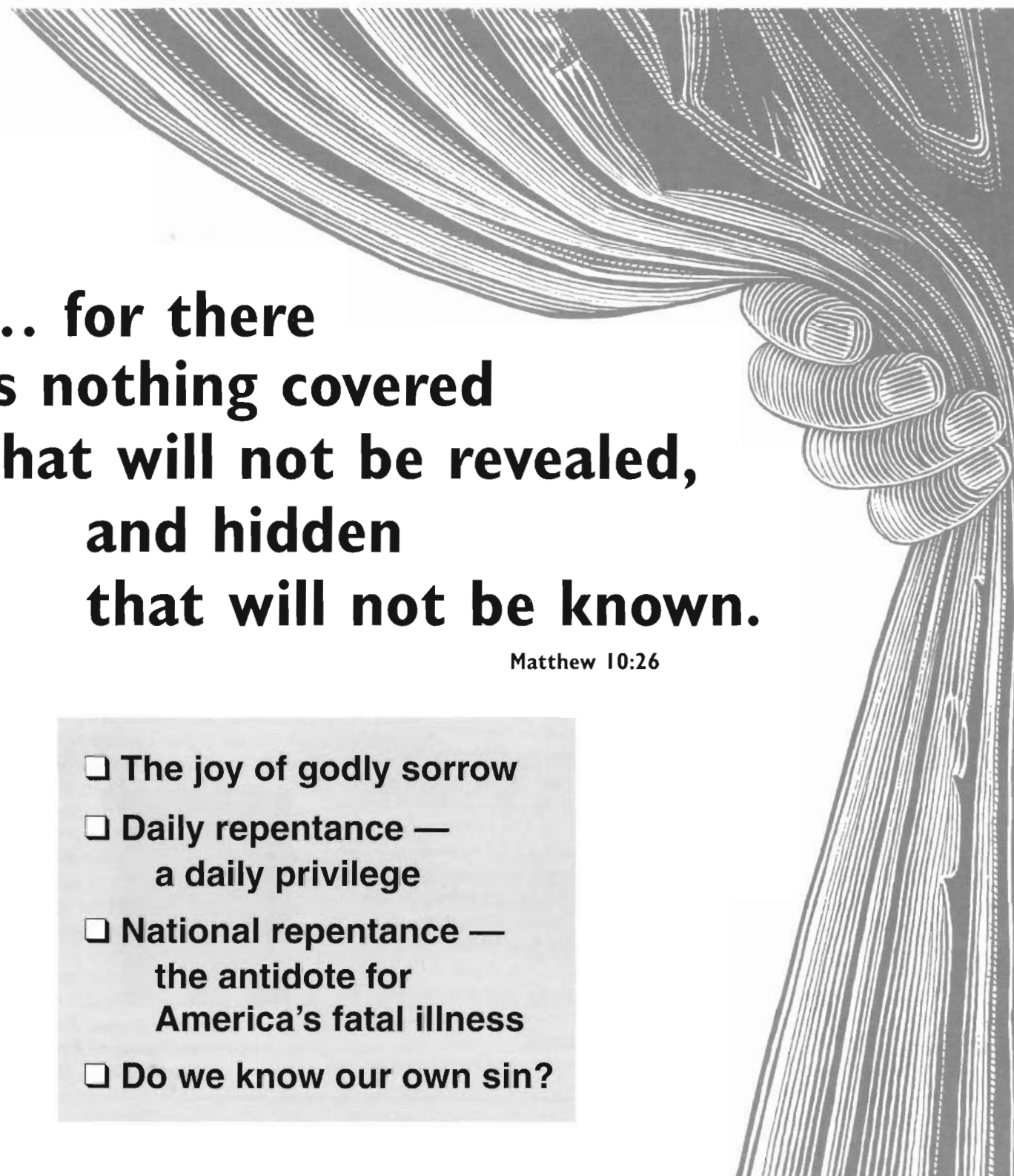


The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

May 18, 1999



**... for there
is nothing covered
that will not be revealed,
and hidden
that will not be known.**

Matthew 10:26

- ☐ The joy of godly sorrow
- ☐ Daily repentance —
a daily privilege
- ☐ National repentance —
the antidote for
America's fatal illness
- ☐ Do we know our own sin?

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 18, 1999
Volume 37, Number 7



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 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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For subscription changes and information: *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 612-545-5631.

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

Conquerors in Jesus

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

— Romans 8:37

Each person, young or old, has a decision to make every day of their life. This is the decision whether to allow the troubles of this world to conquer us, or to allow Jesus to help us to be conquerors.

Imagine two individuals. Both are the same nationality. Both are the same age, hair color, size and weight. Both grew up in the same community, but that is where similarities end. In their outlook on life, the two are as different as night and day.

One individual will take a good look at problems as they arise and work through them. This person always learns from mistakes and challenges.

The other individual buckles under pressure and runs away from all problems. Trouble repeatedly accompanies this person.

Whether the problem is a spiritual or a business one, most people today will choose to run.

What if Jesus had been like the person who crumbles under pressure? Would He have died for your sin and mine? No. To follow His example, and to be the conquerors that Romans 8:37 says we are, we need to learn to stand up to problems in the Lord's strength. We need to let Jesus teach us on a daily basis how to deal with life and death. The Word of God tells us that there is power in Jesus to conquer in every situation. Do you believe this?

There is no place where we can

hide from our problems. But no problem is so difficult that Jesus can't help us through it. There is always help. Victory is always available. Jesus is always there, willing to carry us to victory. We may look like conquerors to the world, but if we're honest we'll always give Him the credit.

The song, "We Are More Than Conquerors" by Ralph Carmichael has Romans 8:37 in mind:

*We are more than conquerors
through Him who loved us so.*

*The Christ who dwells within
us is the greatest Pow'r we know.*

*He will fight beside us tho' the
enemy is great.*

*Who can stand against us?
He's the Captain of our fate.*

*Then we will conquer, never
fear; so let the battle rage.*

*He has promised to be near
until the end of the age.*

*We are more than conquerors
through Him that loved us so.*

*The Christ who dwells within
us is the greatest Pow'r we know.*



— **Pastor James Rasmussen**
*Director of Evangelism
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

sound bites

True theology challenges the presuppositions of North American culture, both secular and churchly, both of which seem to be primarily concerned with the "right to happiness." True theology calls on us to deny the claims of self and exalt God instead.

1

— *J. I. Packer*

Preachers still excoriate abortion, pornography and other excesses of an anything-goes society. But these jermiads are fists shaken at the world outside, not fingers pointed at those in the pews. ... If religious congregations are to be of service to society ... they must first deal with the sinners in their midst.

4

— *Kenneth L. Woodward*

6

Neither wealth nor fame can open the way of salvation, but only God's grace, given to those who will humbly acknowledge their need.

— *Alan J. White*

2 Wherein you reprove another be unblamable yourself, for example is more prevalent than precept.

— *George Washington*

3 In the heart contrition, in the mouth confession, in the deed complete humility.

— *Chrysostom*

He calls it God's alien work to terrify because God's own proper work is to quicken and console. But he terrifies, he says, to make room for consolation and quickening because hearts that do not feel God's wrath in their smugness spurn consolation.

5

— *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*

The joy of godly sorrow



— by Rev. Jon Benson
Word of Life Free Lutheran
Upsala, Minnesota

Before being escorted to the principal's office, the playground bully reluctantly utters the expected words, "I'm sorry" to the classmate who he has just given a bloody nose. Is he really sorry that he caused pain and injury to his classmate? No. His sorrow is over the fact that he got caught and that he is going to face disciplinary action from the principal, and from his parents when he gets home. But on the inside, he still feels really good about the punches he gave before the playground monitor brought the fight to a halt.

The Apostle Paul, in II Corinthians 7:10 makes a distinction between "godly sorrow" and "worldly sorrow." In the New International Version, the verse reads as follows:

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

In the incident of the playground bully, we have a classic example of worldly sorrow. This kind of sorrow concerns itself only with grief over the consequences of having been caught.

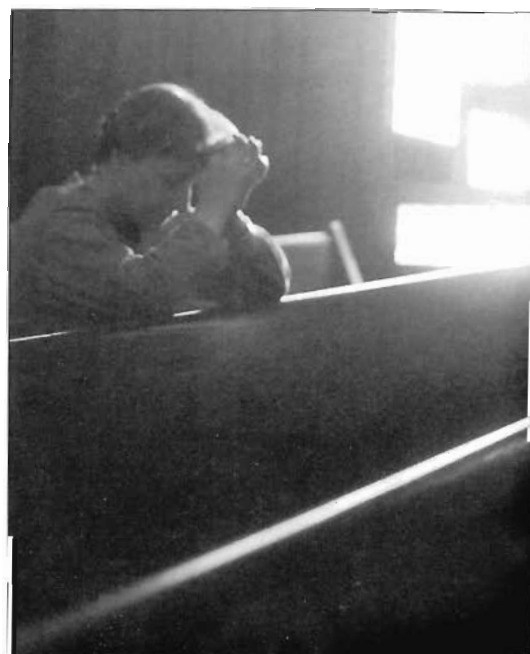
Worldly sorrow is characterized by a lack of remorse. It is demonstrated by the child that says, "I'm sorry", and breaks down in tears when he is punished for breaking a lamp because he was playing with a ball in the living room when he knew better. But after being punished he goes right back to playing the same way. Upon finding his brother he is overheard to say, "Why did you have to go and tell Mom it was my fault? Do you realize how long it is going to take me to save up enough allowance money to replace that lamp?"

Godly sorrow, on the other hand, is demonstrated by the child who acknowledges to the parent, "I was wrong. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I'll try not to do it again." He then demonstrates remorse by offering to pay for the lamp that needs replacing. Godly sorrow is characterized by grief over the wrong that was done, by repentance, and by an earnest desire to do better next time.

Godly sorrow is at the heart of Psalm 51. This Psalm of confession contains these phrases, "Have mercy on me, O God ... blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge" (verses 1-4). Later on in that same Psalm, King David speaks of having a "broken and contrite heart" (verse 17).

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation." In order for salvation to come to me, I need to grieve (have great sorrow) over the fact that I have sinned. David

Daily repentance — a daily privilege



stated concerning himself in Psalm 51, *my* transgressions, *my* iniquity, *my* sin. In the same way I need to have great sorrow over the wrong I have done.

Worldly sorrow would have me blame someone else for my sin. We see that kind of sorrow evidenced far too often these days. Godly sorrow leads me to acknowledge my own fault. Godly sorrow leads me to repent of my sins, and seek forgiveness in the shed blood of Christ.

Until I am ready to take responsibility for my own sinfulness, confess my sins to God, and seek His forgiveness in Christ, I will never enjoy salvation. The same is true for you as well. Passing the blame for your sinfulness will not remove from you the guilt and punishment for your sins. Only by coming to God with a broken and contrite heart, acknowledging and repent-

ing of your sin, and seeking forgiveness in Christ can you receive and enjoy salvation.

In addition to leading us to salvation, godly sorrow over sin should be a part of the Christian's daily experience, that we might always be living with joy in our salvation.

Some of us may remember from our confirmation instruction the question, "What is required that a Christian may receive the forgiveness of sins every day?" (question #252 in Sverdrup's Explanation to Luther's Small Catechism).

The answer to that important question reads as follows,

"That he repents every day, or that he daily feels his sins with deep shame and sorrow, confesses his sins to God, and earnestly seeks the grace of God in Christ." Where daily there is godly sorrow over sin, the joy of salvation abounds to the glory of God, and Christ our Savior.



"Worldly sorrow would have me blame someone else for my sin."



— by *Pastor
Harvey L. Jackson
Zoar Lutheran
Hatton, North Dakota*

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin,
Each victory will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue,
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

Chorus:

Ask the Saviour to help you, comfort,
strengthen, and keep you.
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through."

Each day is time for this hymn in my life. I need daily repentance, and Jesus answers my prayer for forgiveness and power over temptation. As long as I am here on earth, I need to walk with the Lord in the light of His Word. Pride, jealousy, selfishness, anger, envy, and the like (Galatians 5:19-21) constantly need to be dealt with or they will soon bring defeat to us. These are the battlefields of daily life and we deal with them by repentance and asking Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us. The day we will not need to repent will be the day when we arrive in heaven.

Travel for the Christian may be all over the world, but one trip we must take daily is the one to Jesus for His forgiveness through honest repentance. God bless you as you discover anew the joy and victory Christ can give you through His Word.



Oh what a tremendous day it was: Easter morning, 1999! The sky was clear and the temperature pleasant. The 6 a.m. service was about to begin and we greeted one another with, "Christ is risen!"

The fact is, we can begin every morning that way and especially Sunday mornings! There is victory and there is hope in the day and for the future.

That wonderful victory of Jesus really makes life different! There is joy and victory in Him! But there is a problem. It is our sin. But to know we are Christians means we don't have to live in defeat.

Temptation is after us every day. How strong are your temptations? Are they strong enough to weaken you? It is easy to yield to temptation which pulls us away from Jesus and His victory. How about the temptation to worry, or to be afraid, or to not read the Bible or pray? Maybe the temptation that plagues you is to be too busy.

A hymn by Horatio R. Palmer has stayed with me for many years:

A model for national repentance

— by David R. Johnson
West Lisbon Lutheran
Newark, Illinois

National repentance is an idea that would surely qualify for the endangered species list these days. Thoughts of any kind of penitence are rare enough. The concept clashes with our culture's faddish emphasis on self-esteem and grates against modern notions that sin is really ignorance correctable by education. Repentance can be tolerated if kept private and personal but national contrition may be too bitter a pill for most to swallow. Yet it is the only sure antidote for the fatal illness of materialistic pride that afflicts America.



Among believers there's little argument about the need for national repentance. Anyone who knows the truth sees sin's symptoms worsen daily in our culture. Our own problem is more likely that we just don't see a personal responsibility for national sins. It's much easier to lay blame at the feet of godless leaders or a self-indulging populace, and while they will both bear their share, the cure continues to elude us. Thankfully, God's Word contains the eternal prescription for America's healing and restoration if we believers will only avail ourselves of it.

Nehemiah 9 records a prayer of national repentance. It documents Israel's public confession following their return from exile in Babylon. God's power, mercy, and righteous judgments throughout their history are acknowledged repeatedly, and their own pride, stubbornness, and rebellion are confessed to Him. This prayer is a model for American Christians in 1999. Their words, I believe, identify our own personal liability in the collective sins of our country, sins we must each confess.

The sin of pride and self-satisfaction is obvious in this passage. Self-sufficiency has long been an identifying mark of Americans, even Christian Americans, but the line between self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction is very fine. To the degree that we depend upon ourselves or on our good ol' Yankee ingenuity rather than the Lord, we add to

the national sin of pride. The same is true of other sins of commission, the breaking of any of God's commands.

But the sins of omission, the failure to be salt and light, may be more significant for Christians today. The charge in verse 17 that they "were not mindful of your wonders that you did among them." hits hard. How many of those who fill our pews, Sunday schools, and youth groups have no comprehension of the workings of God's hand in the birthing and nurturing of our nation, church and family? Our godly heritage is being lost, forgotten or buried. Psalm 78 warns us about those who turn from God's covenant because they forgot His works and His wonders. Unless people see the truths of God's intervention in their own history, they will see no reason to follow His commandments or even learn them, and we are liable. We have allowed the secularists to rob our generation of the knowledge of our priceless heritage, and have neglected the irrevocable call to teach it to them ourselves. We have failed to be light to our children, our communities, our nation.

Nehemiah 9 lists other personal sins that bring national guilt, but I will consider just one more. Verse 17 also indicts those who "appointed a leader to return to their bondage." This raises two concerns. I believe history's highest political privilege is our opportunity to appoint leaders via the ballot box. The greatest modern political mystery to me is the inexcusably low percentage of Christians who are registered and vote. Failure in that duty has given the enemy an open door to return us to bondage. The duty is even more urgent for local and state elections since that is the foundation of our governmental house.

The second concern is how our ballot selections are made. Exit polls show that believers often choose candidates based on expected material benefits rather than on moral and spiritual principles. God warned Israel through Isaiah that He would choose evil for those who "chose that in which I do not delight." Choices in the voting booth have far-reaching consequences, and we dare not take that responsibility lightly or ignorantly. Having neglected or misused our franchise, we have failed to be salt in this generation.

One of the great lessons of history however, is that history's course is not altered by the masses, but rather by small minorities of disciplined and committed people. A course-changing national repentance need not require great numbers of penitent citizens, only a handful in fervent, effectual, confessional prayer.



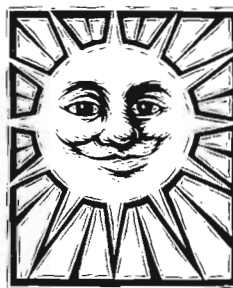
The blessings that come from repentance

— by Andy Britz
St. Paul's Lutheran
Cloquet, Minnesota

It has been winter for a long time. The snow has come and I have shoveled it off my steps, driveway, car and self. All the effort and energy put forth is worth it until I wake up the next morning and find that it has all been replaced. The snowplows rumble by pushing all they can to the side (in my driveway) while spreading out a mixture of salt and dirt to aid those who venture out. Most days throughout the winter I envy those with a home office.

Nevertheless, there is a job to get done, activities to plan, and youth to visit, so I am among those whose daily life begins with a hot cup of coffee in one hand and a shovel in the other. My somewhat rusty, cold, yet faithful Jeep springs to life each morning and with all four tires in gear we make our way through the unplowed back streets of Cloquet, Minnesota to the church each day. Although the winter is long and tough, it is

amazing how a single sign of spring can lift even the heaviest of spirits — the first chirp of a bird, or a ray of sunlight that actually feels warm, or the ski hill radio announcements of their last-day sales. There is hope.



In the weeks to follow, just as every year in the past, the snow does begin to fade. Slowly at first, but then, before you know it, all that is left is the dirt and salt and indescribable muck everywhere.

Our lives can often mimic a winter's day turning to spring. On the outside we can make ourselves look and feel just fine. To a passerby we may even look as beautiful as new fallen snow. Even though we try to deny what is underneath our flimsy cover, the truth, the reality of God will eventually shine as bright as the sun, melting away all that false, showing us, and all who know us, who we really are — a dirty and sinful creature.

Now there is a choice. Choice number one is to run and hide out until next winter
(continued on next page)

BLESSINGS OF REPENTANCE

in a vain attempt to get covered once again, or choice number two, get cleaned up.

When sin captivates a heart, and the heart turns cold, it can then hold that delicate cover of snow in an attempt to at least look white. In reality, it is only cold and hard. Nothing good comes from it, except making all that it comes in contact with just as cold.



No life can be found, and each day is just a little more miserable than the previous. Hope is lost, and the heart follows. No longer will a hot cup of coffee and shovel do the trick.

Repentance is a word often spoken of in a church service, special meeting and/or youth events. The congregation nods in collective agreement with all the pastor or speaker has to say, but often no action ever takes place. Though a bit chilly there is comfort in that new fallen blanket of snow. No one has to see the dirt. Just a nod of the head and a remark of what a powerful sermon that was seems to satisfy everyone and anyone. With a slight shiver we are out the door. Freed for another week. Only our thoughts and reasoning go with us.

"How can I go to the altar and show the congregation my dirt when I am on the board of trustees, or the youth pastor, or a sponsor? It would do so much harm, so much trust would be lost." Reasons and excuses will attack our minds faster than the blink of an eye. What is then kept from us, is all that God has in store for our lives. So, punch-drunk from the onslaught of excuses,

and dizzied by the twisting of the truth, we stumble out the door, embracing the cold.

I would advise not to run. The winter is long and cold and for now it has come to pass. A promise awaits us. Cleansing comes from God.

Many think that we have to be cleaned up to be able to be presentable to God. However, no matter how hard we scrub, no matter how hot the water and powerful the soap we use, nothing we can do will make us pure white. No expensive suit, no perfect hair, not even being the first one to the doors of the church on Sunday will make us worthy. The beauty, the blessing of repentance comes when we realize that God comes to us. We take what makes us nod our heads on Sunday, and place it in our hearts. Then God picks us up out of our filth and stench, and washes us clean with His tears of joy. He places on us a robe whiter than any fallen snow.

Although He came to get us, He refuses to leave us where we are. So through His leading, guiding, and direction, each day we are moved to be more and more like His Son. He desires us to be like Jesus.

Through our repentance we will find His forgiveness, and the ability to forgive others. In our repentance He touches our lives with compassion as He cleans us from the inside out, creating in our hearts compassion toward others. In our repentance He teaches us, hearing our questions and guiding us to the answer. As a result, He blesses our hearts with the ability to listen to others. In His ability to show us the truth, we are then blessed with not having to fear as our faith is strengthened. In making our hearts empty of the sins that filled it, He fills us with a hunger to worship Him with a rejoicing heart. In His dedication to us, He gives us the ability to endure all things with a focused heart.

We now have life, new life, where there was once cold, darkness and death. We have passion rather than sorrow. We are effective rather than afflicted. We are bold, we believe, we have hope.

We all at one point or another have possibly heard the phrase, "April showers bring May flowers." Well, as the forecast of snow turns to forecasts of spring rain, all that dirt and grime is washed away. Down through the sewers it goes, never to be seen again. The sun comes out, the ugliness beneath the snow has washed away, and the flowers begin to bloom.



AFLC-Canada holds 16th annual conference

Bethel Lutheran in Frontier, Saskatchewan, hosted the Canadian AFLC Annual Conference during April 9-11, 1999. The theme was "Make Known His Deeds Among the People" from I Chronicles 16:8b. Fifty-eight representatives from member congregations and visitors attended from the seven congregations located in Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan.

Committees and planning sessions were held on Friday. The Women's Missionary Federation session on Friday afternoon featured Donna Hundebly of Elbow, Saskatchewan as the keynote speaker. The Friday evening worship and communion service opened the conference. The message was brought by Pastor Jim Winter of Lake Alma, Saskatchewan.

Pastor Kelly Henning of Salmon Arm, British Columbia began Saturday's meeting with a Bible hour. A greeting was shared by Pastor Jose Orr, who with his wife, Lorna and family will be working with Missionary Connely Dyrud on the Campo Mourão campus in Brazil. He will translate the Ambassador Sunday School material into Portuguese and Lorna, a nurse, will help at the Miriam Infant Home. The Orrs have been working with an evangelical group in the Amazon region and for health reasons have been advised to move to a more moderate climate. The Orrs currently are working and studying at Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, Alberta.

Following the business meeting, the prayer time was led by Pastor Collin Hauch and two of the elders from his congregation in Camrose, Alberta. Elections, discussion of resolutions and other business matters continued Saturday afternoon. Pastor Gene Sundby was reelected as president on the first ballot. The conference passed a resolution to have a day of prayer and fasting for the mission project in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia as they seek God's direction. Pastor Steve Olinger of

Concerned Lutherans

It's about time that concerned Lutherans got concerned about winning the lost to Christ." One of our Canadian brothers spoke these words at a conference several years ago, and they still speak to my heart every time I quote them.

Too often we use the word "concerned" to speak of theological issues (i.e., concerned about the erosion of scriptural authority) or social issues (i.e., concerned about abortion). These are certainly valid concerns for Christians, and we are called to take a righteous stand in the battle for the Bible or for the lives of unborn children.

Yet I am reminded of the story that Dr. James Kennedy told many years ago, about a couple who moved into the community where he served and visited his church one Sunday. "We're looking for an evangelistic church," they declared to him when he visited in their home. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed, telling them about opportunities offered by his congregation in evangelism training and outreach. "Well," they said after an uncomfortable silence, "I guess what we're looking for is a church with an evangelistic pastor."

The highest priority for concerned Christians must be the evangelization of the lost. This is written when the media is filled with accounts of the school killings in Colorado and the atrocities in Kosovo. My wife and I recently attended a rally for family values, where we were met on the sidewalk outside of the auditorium by dozens of protesters parading their perverted lifestyle. Is there any doubt in our minds that this old world is lost and in need of a Savior?

Evangelism is more than a program or a once-a-year series of special meetings. It is born in the heart of one who knows what it is to be lost and found. If everyone has an undying soul that will be either saved or lost for all eternity, then the most important thing in all the world is that the lost are saved. Do you and I believe this? Does the AFLC believe this? Are we really concerned? Then the life of our congregations and common endeavors will reflect this solemn conviction and commitment.

God has guided a gifted assortment of His children into our AFLC family, and I believe that this is for a special purpose, to use us in His great work of winning the world for Christ and His Kingdom. May we be found faithful!

— *Pastor Robert L. Lee*

Ferndale, Washington has been leading a weekly Bible study in the community, which is just across the border.

The Saturday evening service was led by Pastor Rob Lewis, the Canadian Director of the World Mission Prayer League and the message was brought by Pastor Gerald Gettis of Vernon, British Columbia.

On Sunday morning the worship service followed the Bible hour. Host Pastor Manfred Kurschner led the service and AFLC-Canada President Gene Sundby preached the closing message.

— *Pastor Jim Winter*
Lake Alma, Saskatchewan

AFLC Schools receive funds

The Free Lutheran Seminary received \$3,175 from Lutheran Brotherhood through the Member Matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 34 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members during the first quarter of 1999. Also during the first quarter, \$5,425 was given to AFLBS through 58 gifts from the LB program.

Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT gift program matches members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher learning nationwide.

The question

Last January 7-22, nineteen people, including eight AFLBS students, boarded the Partners in Mission Outreach bus in Minneapolis and traveled to work with Pastor Gabriel Mercado and Triumph Lutheran in Ejido Aguarista, Mexico. On the evening of January 15, the group visited a village called Camp 77 to show a movie, "The Passion of Jesus."

About 200 people gathered and several began asking questions. "What can you tell us about the end of the world? Is it true? When will it happen?" Those were good questions and we went to our Bibles to find the answers. The Bible gives us a list of happenings which make us think we ought to be preparing ourselves for this great event and expecting the coming of our blessed Lord and Savior.

People are searching today. They need to know how to distinguish the signs of the coming of Christ Jesus to this world. Each day that passes, we see signs and realize we are closer to seeing Jesus return in the clouds.

The new millennium is near and the predictions that Christ made have been fulfilled one by one. Others are yet to be fulfilled. Most of the world today needs to be

— *Pastor Gabriel Mercado*
translated by *Mae Swanson*
Nogales, Mexico

shaken out of its sleep of apathy, doubt and ignorance into which it has fallen.

Brother, sister, you and I have the answer that this troubled and fearful world needs. We still have work to do, teaching those who are spiritually needy. Let us pray for the salvation of every human being and let us give a clear and precise response to all that occurs as a sign of the soon coming of Jesus. In Matthew 24 we read of several of these signs as well as in Mark 13. These are days when the glorious words of Jesus in John 14:1-6 are most gratifying. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ... I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

These days for many are a time of distress, anguish and fear, but for the Church it is a time of rejoicing and happiness as we pray Revelation 22:20, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

New corporation organized to serve AFLC missions

The Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters (FLAPS) is being established as a non-profit corporation dedicated to reaching lost souls for the Lord Jesus Christ through providing aviation services such as air transport, training, technical support, and maintenance, for AFLC mission staff. Officers approved by the coordinating, home and world missions committees are as follows:

President — Mr. Ralph Peterson, Portland, North Dakota

Vice President — Pastor Tom Tuura, St. James, Minnesota

Secretary/Treasurer, Resident Agent — Mr. Robert Dietsche, Oscola, Wisconsin

Safety and Check Ride Instructor/Head of Maintenance — Mr.

Lavon Bohling, Deshler, Nebraska

Safety and Check Ride Instructor/Trainer — Pastor Mike Crowell, Lake Stevens, Washington

World Missions Representative/Coordinator — Pastor Jeff Swanson, Newark, Illinois

Home Missions Representative/Coordinator — Mr. Eldwyn Van Bruggen, Valley City, North Dakota



The president of the BFLC in India, Denarji Raju, his wife and two children, Phoebe and Ebenezer.

EMBAIXADOR

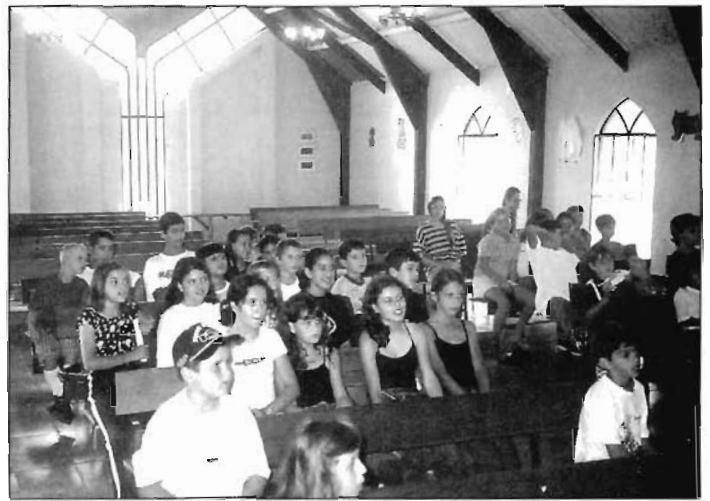
MARÇO 97 LUTERANO ANO 1 VOL. 3

- Um grande desafio: Missões no século 21
- Que os povos vejam a luz
- Parábola do pombo correio
- Entre nós
- Todos nós podemos abrir caminho
- Para pensar...
- Porque frequentar a Escola Bíblica Dominical?

MINHA PÁTRIA PARA CRISTO,
EIS A MINHA ORAÇÃO.



Vacation Bible school was held at the Campo Mourão campus last January.



A session during Children's Camp at Campo Mourão this last February.



Missionary Tamba Abel with her Sunday school class in Campo Grande.



The church leadership in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso Do Sul. Pictured L. to R.: Missionary Jonathan Abel; Assistant Pastor Valdecir De Lima; Youth Leader, Fernando Fernandes; and Assistant Pastor of the preaching point in Cidade Monene, Luiz Amaral.

Pictured to the left is the March cover of the *Embaixador Luterano*, a new project started in Campo Grande, Brazil, in hopes of "bringing us closer together since the churches in Brazil are so far apart," says Missionary Jonathan Abel. Most of the articles in the six-page monthly are written by Brazilians. There will be some articles translated from the U.S. counterpart, *The Lutheran Ambassador*, upon popular request by the Brazilians. Missionary Abel wrote, "So far there has been a very positive response to the magazine, with many letters and articles pouring in for our *Embaixador*. Please pray with us as we try to get this needed project off the ground."

Aguascalientes, Mexico — Missionaries Debbie Giles and Barb Schierkolk prepared Easter Sunday breakfast for 75 people at Springs of Living Water Church. Four new visitors came forward at the end of the service to pray to receive Christ as their Savior. Please pray for God to confirm and strengthen His work in their hearts. On April 24, missionary interns Fernando and Monse returned from Brazil because their visa extension was denied. They had worked at Campo Mourão and Curitiba.

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson, Campo Mourão, Brazil marked the fourth anniversary of their ministry in Brazil on March 25. Suzie Skramstad, Sarah's sister, continues to live with the Nelsons to help as they prepare to return to the U.S. for furlough on May 27, 1999. Short-term assistant Sarah Nystrom, Cokato, Minnesota lives on the school's campus (SEMEAR) and assists at the Miriam Infant Home where 19 little ones reside.

There will be a pre-conference AFLC Home Missions prayer and praise service Tuesday, June 15, 8 p.m. at Calvary Lutheran in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Everyone is welcome.

Lay pastor Merle B. Fagerberg, 72, of Elbow Lake, Minnesota passed away on April 9, 1999 after a long struggle with cancer. He was born on July 31, 1926 in Elbow Lake to Bernt and Martha (Anderson) Fagerberg. After high school, he farmed until he joined the U.S. Army in 1951 and served in the Army Signal Corps during the Korean Conflict.

In 1952 Merle was united in marriage to Lois Rosin. Following his discharge from the Army in 1953, he resumed farming with his father until 1970. He then served as lay pastor at United Lutheran Church in Elbow Lake until 1981 when he began serving the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish. It was a four-point parish until the Sarpsborg church was destroyed by fire and that congregation joined with the Zion congregation.

Merle attended the AFLC Seminary Summer Institute of Theology for several summers. He retired in 1992 and later became the visitation pastor at Trinity Lutheran in Wendell, a position he served in until the time of his death.

Merle is survived by his wife, Lois; four daughters; Karen Melo, West Fargo, North Dakota; Cheryl Taylor, Eagle Bend, Minnesota; Beth Reich, Aliso Viejo, California; and Annette Wire, Golden Valley, Minnesota; one son, Paul Fagerberg of Plymouth, Minnesota; twelve grandchildren, three sisters and one brother.

His funeral service was on April 14 at the Zion/Sarpsborg church in Dalton.

Blessed be his memory.



Pastors Fagerberg and Finstrom.

He was my mentor and friend

Pastor Merle had a great love for Jesus, his family, this country, and his Norwegian heritage. He lived out his Christian life day to day and earned the respect of many.

I had the privilege of visiting with Pastor Merle in the hospital a month before he passed away. We talked about the Lord, shared concerns about the ministry, and he mentioned his readiness to be with the Lord and his concern for his family after his home-going. Merle said, "I spent the first of this life farming. I enjoyed the farm and it was a wonderful place to raise a family. The rest of my life I have had the great privilege of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have had the best of both worlds."

When Pastor Merle preached the Word or witnessed to someone,

he was bold and firm, filled with conviction, but overflowing with love and compassion. He was an encouragement to the pastors of the Southwest Central Minnesota District. He always had a good sense of humor (even when Pastor Stockman would step on his golf ball), a word of encouragement and tell us he was praying for us — especially us young pastors.

"God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped His people and continue to help them" (Hebrews 6:10). Pastor Merle's labor among us will not be forgotten.

Pastor Merle was a mentor and my friend, a good example to look up to and admire his love, compassion, and walk with the Lord Jesus.

— **Pastor Dale Finstrom**
Glyndon, Minnesota

Rev. Ernest J. Langness, 79, Ishpeming, Michigan, passed away April 16, 1999 at the Norlite Nursing Center in Marquette where he had resided for the past five years. He was born on January 28, 1920 in Grygla, Minnesota to Jerome and Jeanette (Fossum) Langness. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. In 1943 he married Hazel Goodman.

He attended Seattle Pacific College, and graduated from Luther Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1958. He served churches in Mt. Lake Terrace, Washington; Viscount and LeRoy, Saskatchewan. He began serving New Luther Valley Lutheran in McVillage, North Dakota in 1963, one of the first AFLC congregations. In 1971 he moved to Hope Evangelical Free Lutheran in Ishpeming where he served for seven years. His last parish before his retirement in 1986 was at Bethel and Emmanuel Lutheran in Faith and Eagle Butte, South Dakota. He had served on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees and also as a member of the AFLC Coordinating Committee.

He was preceded in death by his



wife, Hazel on May 4, 1998 and four brothers and two sisters. Survivors include four daughters: Ruth Cadieux of Edmonton, Alberta; Emma Jean Oien, Binford, North Dakota; Elaine Eliason, Champion, Michigan; and Marilyn Williams, Portage, Michigan; two sons; Jerrold Langness, Fargo, North Dakota and Erling Langness, Ishpeming; and 13 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

The funeral service was on April 19, at Hope Evangelical Free Lutheran Church in Ishpeming with Pastors Herb Franz and Michael Burke officiating. Burial was in the Humboldt Cemetery.

Blessed be his memory.

Ministering to body and soul

Esther Hylden, R.N., a member of Victory Free Lutheran in Park River, North Dakota, recently completed a Parish Nurse Certification Program at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota.

Esther's training has prepared her to minister to individuals and families using her health educator experience and spiritual maturity to promote wellness in body and spirit. She may offer both presence and prayer to those who have ongoing health needs. She may also initiate health education or act as a counselor to those who are facing stressful health situations.

"Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10). Healing and caring activities were a primary part of the ministry of Jesus." Esther added, "It is my goal as a parish nurse to work through the church to improve the health of the body, mind and spirit of the congregation and community members."

He made a difference

I feel very fortunate to have known Pastor Ernest Langness. He became a part of my life in 1978 when he moved to Faith, South Dakota to be my pastor at Bethel Lutheran.

Pastor had a true and deep love for the Lord and through his Sunday services, midweek Bible studies and the many home visits, he helped me to become a more faithful and devoted Christian.

Kind and caring are two words that describe Pastor. He was always there to help someone when the need arose and often would just volunteer his help.

Pastor made a difference in my life and the lives of my husband and children. He and his late wife Hazel were special servants of the Lord. He will be missed by his family whom he loved dearly and the many parishioners he faithfully served throughout his ministry.

— Alice Maier
Faith, South Dakota

From the youth director

This is a monumental year for AFLC Youth Ministries. There has been a new wave of interest in focused, outreach-minded youth ministry!

This past January and February, sixteen churches have inquired about having a person help their congregation lead the youth ministry. Ten of those inquiries have been for full-time positions.

This summer Wade Mobley will be traveling with the AFLBS Ambassadors and speaking to churches. He will be asking the leaders to consider the purpose of their youth program. Looking at Matthew 22:37-39 and Matthew 28:19-20, Wade will be asking churches to consider how they can better follow the great commandment and commission as they win youth for Christ.

Next fall the youth board is planning on sending a nine-month youth ministry training team out to work with churches struggling with their youth ministry. A recent survey showed that 53% of the churches in the AFLC do not have active youth groups. The team will spend time with churches across the country training leaders, evangelizing youth, and helping churches get their youth ministry up and running.

These projects are not possible

without prayer and financial support. Our board would like to ask you to join us in these projects and in the work of AFLC Youth Ministries.

Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Ministries Director
612-545-5631
youthmin@aflc.org
<http://www.aflc.org>

Tribute to a youth worker

Dr. Wilton Bergstrand passed away recently. His funeral was at the Augustana Lutheran Church in downtown Minneapolis. Dr. Bergstrand was the youth director of the former Augustana Synod.

He wrote and edited books like, "Good Counsel for Counselors," and Handbook For Better Luther Leagues." These two books have been printed by our AFLC youth department with the latter now titled, "Leadership Helps for Youth Groups."

At the time he left the youth work department of the Augustana Synod there was a movement to discontinue the office of youth worker and to combine it into the congregational setting in a different way. Later, he wrote an article in a leading Lutheran paper headlined, "The Old Ways are the Best Ways."

Pastor Bergstrand was still a youth worker right to the end of his life. In his latest work on John the Baptist, his interest in youth is clearly seen. He was a communicator with youth up to these latter years. His sharp mind, his humor and his way of approaching students was used by the Lord. In January of 1998, he spoke at our AFLC youth workers' retreat.

He loved his wife Delores, and family dearly and was active in swimming, even into his old age. He was not a "churchman" but a pastor who loved the Lord and people.

Blessed by the memory of Dr. Wilton Bergstrand. He remains the "dean" of youth workers.

— Pastor Dennis Gray
Grafton, North Dakota

**Get your last minute
registration in for the
FLY Convention in Estes Park,
Colorado, June 28-July 3.
It's \$325 by June 1.**

**AFLBS Spring Concert
May 21, 8 p.m.
AFLC Schools Graduation
May 22, 1 p.m.**

Annual conference coffee donations needed. Money may be sent to AFLC headquarters or bring fruit, crackers or cookies to the Fergus Falls conference, June 16-20.

Two AFLC pastors receive doctorates

Pastor Tim Hurley, Ponca City, Oklahoma and Pastor Mark Olson, Arlington, South Dakota both graduated from the University of South Dakota in Vermillion on May 8 with a degree of Doctor of Education in educational administration. Pastor Hurley's dissertation was on "Student Satisfaction in a Religious Post-Secondary Setting" (with a primary focus on AFLBS). Pastor Olson's paper was on, "Perceptions of AFLC Clergy Regarding Continuing Education."

Memorial Gifts

March 1999

(Department given to,
in memory of ...)

Evangelism

Gertie Hughes
Pastor Harvey Carlson

Vision 2004

Esther Hemingson
Edwin Ackerson
Florence St. Germain
Ralph Christianson
Harvey Haugrud

Youth Ministries

Mariah Olson

World Missions

Edwin Mathison
Francis Kibler
Ellen Hartsoch

Home Missions

Robert Thompson
Brian Erbes
Lucy King
Gladys Carlson
Evangelist Clifford Anderson
Howard Fox

AFLBS

Aubrey Strand
Howard Fox
Ellen Hartsoch
Erling Hoseth
Verna Lindgren
Carrol Ask
Jeanette Hove Rittnerman

AFLTS

Myrtle Larson

General Fund

Emil Flaten

Pastor Philip Haugen, Culbertson, Montana, has resigned as the pastor of Bethel Lutheran in Culbertson and Faith Lutheran in Brockton in order to accept the call from the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees to serve on the seminary and Bible school faculty. He has ministered in the Culbertson parish since 1993. Pastor Haugen had been on the schools' faculty from 1977-1993. He and his family expect to move to the Minneapolis area before he begins August 1.

Lay Pastor Wayne Hanson, Apple Valley, Minnesota began serving Calvary Free Lutheran in Gilbert, Arizona on May 1, as an interim pastor. The home mission congregation has been served by Pastor Walter Johnson who completed his interim pastorate the end of April. Pastor Hanson has worked with Minnesota Valley Lutheran in Lakeville using the Miracle Mile Ministry in their evangelistic outreach. His wife, Jan, expects to join him in Gilbert upon the selling of their home in Apple Valley.

Pastor Martin Horn and family's new address and phone number is: 407 2nd St. NE, Fosston, MN 56542; phone: 218-435-6779 (home); 218-435-1590 (office); e-mail: mhorn@means.net.

Jerry Nelson, Onalaska, Wisconsin was approved at a recent coordinating committee meeting to serve as a licensed lay pastor. He is serving with Pastor Richard Gilmore at Christ is Lord Lutheran in Onalaska.

Bismarck, North Dakota —

Calvary Lutheran is now being served by Interim Pastor Arthur Wetzel of Glen Ullin, North Dakota.

Southwest Central Minnesota District — On the weekend of April 10, nearly fifty youth gathered at Faith Haven Bible Camp near Battle Lake, Minnesota to focus on the theme, "Becoming a Contagious Christian."

Oceanside, California —

Community Lutheran Church is looking for an experienced teacher for the kindergarten class for their new school beginning in September 1999. They also need a volunteer builder/carpenter for their school. A one-bedroom house with fire place is provided. For more information call Pastor Orville Hiepler at 760-731-0980.

Seminarian Jason Holt has accepted the call to serve Calvary Free Lutheran in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, as their associate pastor. Rev. Rodger Olson is the senior pastor.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (3 months) — January 1 - March 31, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$14,509.65	49,894.46	21
Seminary	110,296.00	6,667.16	32,419.65	29
Bible School	147,674.00	7,645.21	49,364.46	33
Home Missions.	238,152.00	18,690.16	48,888.30	21
World Missions.	190,909.00	9,495.31	31,442.32	16
Capital Investment	14,065.00	279.88	1,174.61	8
Parish Education	56,854.00	10,549.07	20,860.89	37
Church Extension	21,051.00	1,607.04	7,253.35	34
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	69,443.48	241,298.04	24
TOTALS 1997	1,287,758.00	93,751.63	290,950.28	23

Goal 25%

The Evangelism Department received \$4,563.70 in March.

Talking about our sin

W

We don't mind talking about sin. Actually, our old nature kind of enjoys it. As long as it is somebody else's sin we are talking about.

The rampant immorality in our society is terrible. We do not have to look far to find things that are condemned in the Bible but condoned in our day. As we see the sin that surrounds us we feel like King David did when the prophet Nathan told him about the rich man who took a poor man's only ewe lamb for himself. "David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity'" (II Samuel 12:5, 6, NIV).

David was right that the sin that had been committed was terrible and deserved to be punished. It was not, however, until Nathan said, "You are the man!" (II Samuel 12:7, NIV), that he got the point of the story. Nathan wasn't just talking about how terrible those other people were. David was the guilty one. David was the one who had sinned.

We are right to be bothered by sin. But it should not only be "their" sin that concerns us. Our sin should disturb us as well.

When Nathan told David, "You are the man!" he was not using the phrase the way it is often used today, as a means of encouraging someone and building up their confidence. He was telling the King: "You are the one who has broken God's law. You slept with Uriah's wife. You had him killed. You deserve to be punished severely."

God says in His Word: "There is no one righteous, not even one: there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 11, 23, NIV). "They" are guilty, and so are we.

After a poor finish in a golf tournament, someone asked professional golfer Nick Faldo if his failure was due to a problem with his putter. "The problem," Faldo said, "was with the puttee."

It's tempting in golf to make excuses. We blame the clubs, or the wind, or the way the grass was cut, or some noise that was made while we were swinging. Faldo knew the problem was with the one holding the club.

We look at problems in our communities, our

congregations, our families, our own lives, and we look around for a place to affix blame. We talk about bad luck, or bad things others have done. A humble, repentant heart looks inside first. Jesus said, "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5, NIV). We first must talk with God in honest confession about our own sin, before we can talk to a brother or sister about their sin.

We know the sins of others, but do we know our own? After being confronted by Nathan, David was inspired by God to write, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (Psalm 51:3, NIV). While the immorality of others was certainly visible, he did not fail to forget his own sinfulness.

"The word of God ... penetrates Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight" (Hebrews 4:12, 13, NIV). We can't cover up our failure by talking about how far short the other guy falls. Only "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin" (I John 1:7, NIV).

Our sin is not covered up. It is confronted by the holiness of God and must be confessed to Him.

A rich ruler asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. He was apparently a man with high morals and a stellar reputation. Their conversation could have quickly become a long condemnation of the evils around them. Jesus, though, told the man, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in

heaven. Then come, follow me" (Luke 18:22, NIV). Jesus didn't just talk about what others needed to do to get their life on track. He focused on what this man needed to do.

The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, confronts each of us with our own sinfulness. Let us not always try to change the subject onto a discussion of what others need to do. Let us pray, "Search me, O God and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23, NIV). Let us do so with the confidence that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9, NIV).

The sin around us looks terrible. What is inside us looks just as bad. But in spite of the ugliness, Jesus forgives. His blood makes us clean and washes us white as snow.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

**"We know
the sins of
others, but
do we know
our own?"**

BUILDING THE BASE

Freedom: A work of the Holy Spirit

A Are we really free? Already this year we have looked at this question a couple of times. The first time, we saw that by nature we are dead in our trespasses and sins. The second time we saw that we are set free by the grace of God, which is seen in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This time we will look at the need for the Holy Spirit to teach our hearts of the freedom which is ours in Christ.

Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." This verse is often used within the AFLC when we write about our freedom as a church body. The truth is, however, that the freedom we claim exists is only real if the individual members are spiritually free and living.

So how are we made free and living? Only by the Spirit of God. We see this in John 1:12-13, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Also John 3:5 says, "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'"

In the last part of II Corinthians 3:6, we read, "... but the Spirit gives

life." Luther brings out the work of the Spirit in the explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith."

In the catechism's answer to the question, "What is the New Birth?", we see the Holy Spirit's work in our salvation. "The New Birth is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit whereby He, through His indwelling in our hearts, renews the image of God in us, and thus creates a new spiritual man."

This work of the Holy Spirit whereby we are made alive, is a work that takes place in our hearts. It is not a work we do in our minds. When we teach that faith or repentance is an act of ours, we have turned the gospel into a message of law. But the law is powerless to set us free. Galatians 2:16 says, "... since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

It is also not a work that we can bring about whenever it is convenient. We can in no way manipulate the Spirit of God. So often today, it seems we neglect to emphasize the work of the Spirit of God. The reality is, if the Spirit of God does not teach our hearts the gospel, we are not spiritually living or spiritually

free. And if we as individuals are not free and living, then our congregations aren't either. So then by what means does the Spirit of God make us alive and free? By the Word of God and baptism we are made alive.

That is a hard message to hear, isn't it? An even harder message is that once the Spirit of God has made us alive in Christ, there is nothing we can do to maintain that life. Even when we are alive, our life and freedom are completely dependent on the work of God by the Spirit in our lives. How then does the Spirit maintain the life of a believer? By the Word of God and the Lord's Supper. So then, our entire freedom as individuals, and as congregations, is entirely dependent on the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."



— Jon Dryburgh
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota