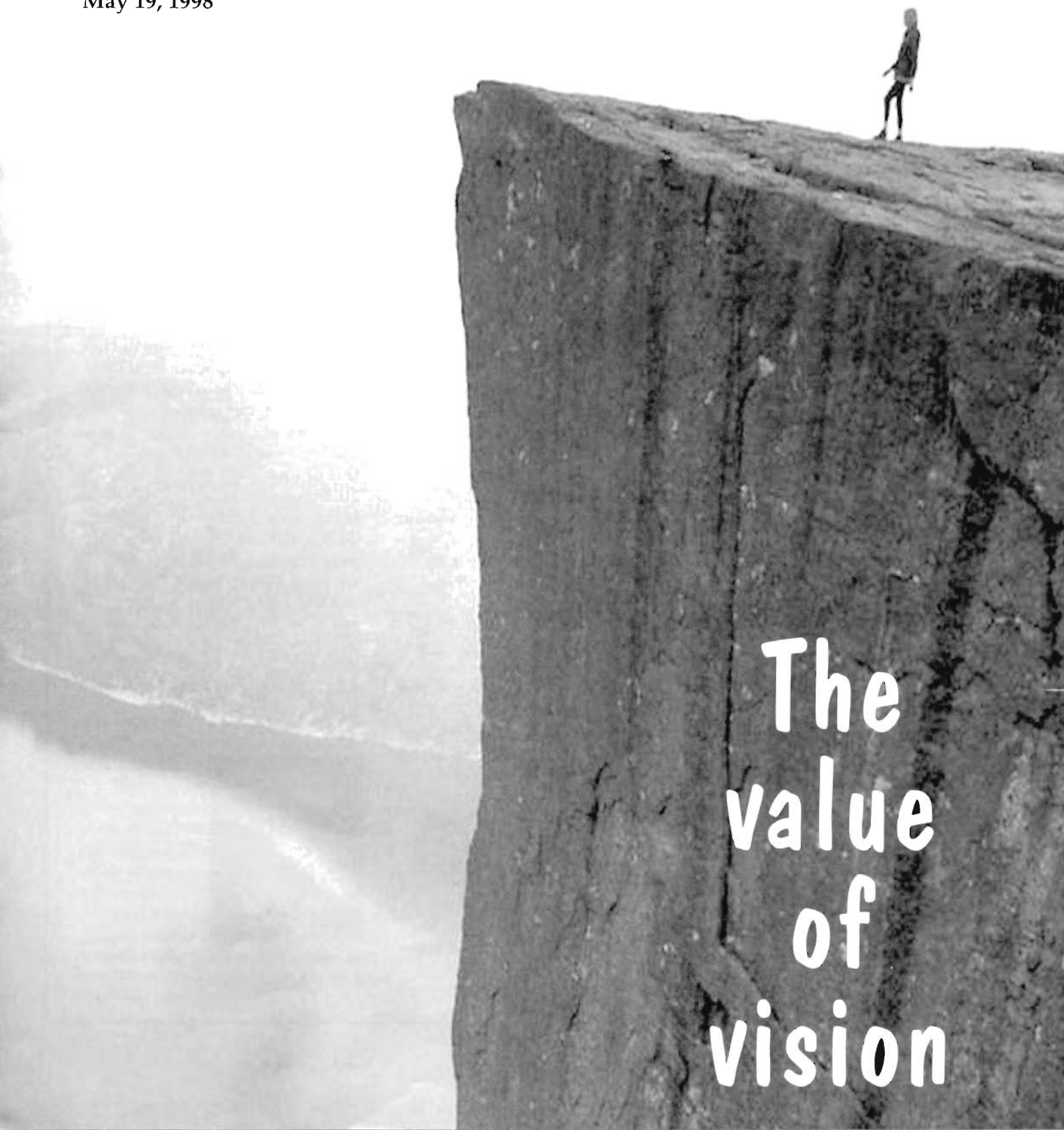


# The Lutheran **AMBASSADOR**

May 19, 1998



The  
value  
of  
vision

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 19, 1998  
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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Entrusting the unknown to the One who knows

# A

A favorite Bible passage for many is Proverbs 3:5-8, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own

understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." Verses five and six especially are often quoted by and for youth and young adults. It is an excellent admonition when looking to the future.

We were created to be in a loving relationship with God. In this relationship, we are to depend totally on God to complete what He wants to accomplish through us. Jesus likened this dependency as to a vine and its branches. Only in an intimate, abiding relationship with Him are we enabled to accomplish His eternal purposes. God intends that we entrust our hearts, our understanding and our ways to Him. He then lives through us as we daily walk by His grace, striving to be all that God wants us to be.

In James 4:13 somewhat of a contrast is given: "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'" What a description of a self-sufficient attitude! We are so inclined to live with over-confidence in our self-made plans. This vision is absent of God. Though it is beneficial to make plans for the future, it is always best to allow God to map out the plan according to His will. Too often we choose to carry out our work according to our abilities, gifts, likes and dislikes and ignore God's direction.

James rightly says, "Why, you

do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." None of us knows what tomorrow will bring.

Since the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995, a significant number of people have shared that this event caused them to become consciously aware that no one can take life today or in the future for granted. These same people confessed that until that catastrophe, they hadn't really given God serious consideration. They kept God at a comfortable distance, not really needing Him, so they thought. Could it be possible that He wants us to live each day in total dependence upon Him? Life is short! It appears for a little while. That is a sobering thought!

James advises us in verse 15, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" We are to seek God's guidance. God takes the initiative in our lives to create the desire to do His will. His Spirit guides us to pray according to His will. When we allow God to lead us, He Himself will bring it to pass. Let us follow Solomon's counsel: entrust our hearts, understanding, and ways to the Lord; acknowledge Him, and God will guide and bless our lives!



— Pastor Jerry Peterson  
First Lutheran Church  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## sound bites

Never sacrifice the  
**1** permanent on  
the altar of the  
immediate.

— Bob Kraning

The fulfillment of your dreams  
may not happen until after  
**4** you are gone. True  
dreams of God can  
take longer than one  
life to be fulfilled. Sometimes  
they take longer than a life-  
time even to come into view.

— Doug Murren

**2** There is no  
magic in small  
plans. When I  
consider my ministry, I think of the  
world. Anything less than that would  
not be worthy of Christ nor His will  
for my life.

— Henrietta Mears

*I don't think  
much of a man  
**3** who is not  
wiser today  
than he  
was yesterday.*

— Abraham Lincoln

Lord, help me do great  
things as though they were  
little, since I do them with  
Your powers; and help me to  
do little things as though  
they were great, because I do  
them in Your Name.

— Blaise Pascal

**6** God has no problems,  
only plans.

— Corrie Ten Boom

*For it is God  
who is  
all the while  
effectually  
at work in you —  
energizing and creating  
in you  
the power  
and desire —  
both to will  
and to work  
his good pleasure.*

*Philippians 2:3 (Amplified Version)*

## Developing a

**D**efinition: Vi-sion (vizh'un), n.  
1. the act of seeing with the  
eye. 2. the power of perceiving  
what is not actually present to  
the eye (The Collegiate Dictio-  
nary).

One day a person said to Helen Keller, "Oh I feel so bad that you aren't able to see!" Keller replied, "I pity those who have eye-sight but don't have vision."

In Habakkuk 2:2-3 the Lord records these words for us: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is for an appointed time; though it tarries, wait for it."

In order to understand and live out the Lord's vision for our lives the following principles need to be established:

### ONE

To experience a sense of vision we need to realize that vision is rooted in our Christ-centered identity and our Christ-centered calling. Once we understand who we are in Christ — our identity: salt, light, co-heirs, citizens of heaven, etc. — then we can experience a sharp sense of vision for our lives and live out our calling — lawyer, pastor, teacher, mother, missionary or whatever it may be. This is illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul. His identity was a child of God, co-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17). His calling was to be an apostle (Ephesians 1:1). His vision was for a ministry to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:8).

### TWO

A by-product of seeking the Lord is vision. Too often we get carried away with a focus on what we can do rather than simply seeking the Lord. "Place your elbows on the window of heaven, gaze deeply upon your God, then turn strong to face your day!" (author unknown). May our desire be to see Christ. Then He will give us a personal vision for our lives.

### THREE

The Lord gives us a glimpse into the future, often by creating a motivation and drive within us. Philippians 2:3 reads, "For

# personal vision



— Pastor Richard Anderson  
King of Glory Lutheran  
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

it is God who is all the while effectually at work in you — energizing and creating in you the power and desire — both to will and to work his good pleasure” (Amplified Version).

When I was in Bible school (AFLBS '67) the Lord gave me a strong calling to be a pastor. Seven years later that calling became a reality as I was ordained in Thief River Falls, Minnesota at the 1974 Annual Conference. If today's realities were yesterday's thoughts, ideas and prayers, then some of today's thoughts, ideas and prayers are God's whispers to us regarding our future. Does it not then lead us to be very quiet and seek the Lord, His presence and His will?

## FOUR

Faith is required to live a life of vision. Habakkuk 2:4 says, “The just shall live by faith.” God's plans for us always take time to unfold. So often as life goes by we lose hope for the future. So often our failures, short comings and disappointments become our focus. As a result we lose that sense of adventure and expectation. Rather than thriving we only seek to survive.

God has called us not to give in or give up but to press on to the high calling of Christ Jesus the Lord. Do not let circumstances or people, or even other Christians at times, diminish God's vision for your life. Living by faith enables us to see the possibilities, while many people see the limitations.

## FIVE

In order to sustain our personal vision in this life we need to keep in focus our final vision of seeing Christ face to face in the kingdom of heaven. “I will 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” (John 14:3).

What a great vision to sustain our personal vision while on this earth!



# Our family's MISSION

— Rich and Rhoda Niles  
Helmar Lutheran  
Newark, Illinois

**“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk down the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”**

— Deuteronomy 6:6-7.



The Niles family, (standing), Christy and Grady, Brandon, Kary; (seated), Rhoda and Rich.

**W**hen we were newlyweds, we had ideals for our marriage and our family, as do most young couples. It didn't take long for us to realize that since our marriage involved two sinful human beings, we would very quickly fall short of those ideals. We knew we wanted our home and family to be a “household that served the Lord” as Jeremiah 24:15 states. We prayerfully embarked on that journey.

We are in the stage of life now where most of our child-rearing days are behind us, since our youngest is in college. We often look back to analyze what we did wrong and what we may have done right. We have come to realize that most parents do the best possible job they know how, in raising their children, but the end result is totally in God's hands.

A small boy questioned his Father, “How much money do you make an hour, Daddy?”

The father, irritated by the question, answered, “Twenty dollars an hour. Why?” The boy's response was, “Could I borrow \$10?”

Angered by this, the father said, “So that's what you want! You just want money for something again!”

(continued on next page)

After awhile, the father regretted his hasty reaction, and went to give the boy his \$10, questioning him why he needed the money. The young boy looked at his Dad and asked him this question, "Now I have all \$20. Will you sell me an hour of your time, Daddy?"

One of the most important things you can give to your children is your time. In our work with young people, we have heard over and over again about the longing of these teens to have their parents spend time with them, instead of giving them "things." Children of all ages need to know we are not too busy for them.

One New Year's Eve, we sat in our home and asked our kids to reflect on and recall their highlight for the past year. Our youngest son said it was the night that just he and his dad went to White Castle to eat out together. (They've never been back, so this is not a promotion for White Castle!) It was our son's favorite memory, because it was just he and his dad spending time together. Those times spent one on one are always well worth the effort!

Many families do not eat meals together on a regular basis. They are missing out on a valuable way to spend time together as a

family. It's good to turn the TV off and spend time simply listening to your children. Years ago we developed a habit of not only eating as many meals together as we could, but we sat at the table before bedtime and enjoyed ice cream together. Our children tell us now that this little ritual brings back their fondest memories of time spent together as a family. Some of our best times of fun and laughter were spent gaining weight!

Hand in hand with our time comes the giving of unconditional love. Our children need to know we are their number one fan, no matter what they do or who they become. They will disappoint us, disobey us, make bad decisions, and listen to others before us on occasion. Sometimes we, as parents, see only their faults. It is easy to become critical, rather than encouraging their positive traits. We happen to enjoy the Christian comedian Mark Lowry, and see him as a prime example of what God can do with a hyperactive young man whose mother truly believed God was going to use him in a special way some day. Just as God's love for us is unconditional, so should ours be for our children.

By far, the most important thing we do as Christian parents, is to teach, share, and live our lives for Jesus Christ. The way we treat each other, our friends, and our fellow workers should exemplify Christ in every area. We have tried to teach our children about God's love from the time they were born. That included not only taking them to Sunday school and church and Vacation Bible School, but teaching them at home as well. Teaching and knowing God's rule book for life (the Bible) is very important in the character building of a young person. We have had the great privilege of leading each of our children to the assurance of salvation at tender young ages and watching them grow to adulthood with encouragement and training from their Sunday school classes, confirmation classes, youth groups, and Bible camps. We have also had the joy of watching one of our sons find God's choice of a godly wife. We feel truly blessed!

As we teach and love and spend time with our children, we need to always bring them before the Lord in prayer. Praying for them and praying with them is the greatest responsibility of parenting! The world seems bent to destroy the family unit. We need to pray for God's power to save and keep each of our children for His sake.

**As fathers,  
our mission  
can be likened to a  
relay race.  
According to the  
Christian values that  
govern my life,  
my most important  
reason for living is to  
get the baton,  
the gospel,  
safely in the hands of  
my children.**

**— Dr. James Dobson**





# *The AFLC – a vision with roots*

**The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) was born with a vision that had deep roots.**

**“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”** (II Corinthians 3:17b). The founders of the AFLC began with a vision that was rooted in God’s Word. They were convinced that the freedom of a local congregation is the condition most conducive to spiritual life, so our calling to build free and living Lutheran congregations was strongly stressed. This could never be primarily an issue of polity, or church government, when the goal of spiritual freedom remained in view; however, a church fellowship with as little organization as possible seemed to them to offer less human obstacles than a synodical structure to the working of God’s Spirit. The heart of the vision was to be a “searching test of faith in the power of the Spirit of God” (B.M. Christensen).

The vision for freedom in Christ also finds its roots in the Reformation. Luther’s personal discovery of the gospel resulted from his study of Romans 1:17 which reads, **“He who by faith is righteous shall live.”** The message of justification by grace through faith was proclaimed from pulpit, press, and classroom podium, calling troubled souls to trust in the finished salvation provided by Jesus Christ alone through His atoning death on the cross. The AFLC certainly harbors no vain illusions that we are the only bearers of this good news. It is our privilege to stand shoulder to shoulder with others who share our commitment to scriptural evangelism. We are convinced there continues to be a desperate need in our modern world for this Reformation gospel of freedom in Christ to be plainly preached, received, and lived. **“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36).

Finally, the vision for an association of free and living congregations is rooted in revival. Movements of spiritual awakening under the leadership of such anointed servants as Spener in Germany, Hauge and

Johnson in Norway, Rosenius in Sweden, Ruotsalainen and Laestadius in Finland, gave birth to an evangelical and evangelistic Lutheran heritage carried by our forefathers to the New World. Then, one hundred years ago, a new season of spiritual refreshing burst forth like springtime among the Norwegians in America, leading directly to the establishment of the AFLC’s parent denomination, the Lutheran Free Church.

These awakened and revived pioneers reacted negatively to the straitjacketed church structures they had known in the old country, convinced that these were obstacles to true spiritual life. “A free church in a free land” was their slogan, with congregations bound together only by a common faith and common tasks under the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God. This vision was a result of revival, and cannot be appreciated apart from the awakening movements in which our forefathers shared. They knew that freedom without life soon degenerates into license. **“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another”** (Galatians 5:13).

I believe that God has commissioned the AFLC to carry this vision for free and living Lutheran congregations to a new generation. May we be found faithful!



— Pastor Robert L. Lee  
AFLC President



M

Many maybe recall the same verse upon seeing the title of this article: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

This is most certainly true (as is all of Scripture), but it only states that we must have a vision and not why. A congregation may perish due to: 1) Doing nothing; 2) Doing the wrong thing; 3) Stopping doing - lack of perseverance; or 4) Not doing it together with a clear, God-given vision. A growing and living congregation with vision will continue doing what God has called them to do as a unified body of believers.

God calls His people to action. Scripture teaches us that "Faith without works is dead." Churches don't exist just so that we can have some place to go on Sunday morning. Those with a vision of God also have a vision of ministry.

# Why your congregation

John 15 tells us that we are to "bear much fruit, and that — by this the Father is glorified." This chapter also tells us that the branches that do not bear fruit are cast forth and thrown into the fire (they perish). In the parable of the talents, Jesus commended the servant who used the talents assigned to him and condemned the servant who buried his talent in the ground. Without vision we

## A northern vision

— Brent Logeman

In December 1997 I accepted the invitation to serve the Naknek Lutheran Community Church in Alaska. It is a part of the outreach of the Lutheran Mission Societies. Pastor Tom Olson, Barronett, Wisconsin, is to arrive in mid-June. Until his arrival someone needed to fill in.

I left my home in Metropolis, Illinois, on March 4, 1998, and flew to Anchorage before flying to Naknek. My present plans are to return to Metropolis on June 24, after Pastor Tom arrives.

My primary areas of ministry are preaching and working at the local Christian radio station (also a part of Lutheran

Mission Societies). It is difficult to establish close ties to the people in the community during a short time period so I will leave pastoral outreach for Pastor Tom. I do hope, however, to have a Christian witness in the community by participating in men's basketball, working part-time in a lumberyard, helping remodel a house, and through normal daily interactions.

Ministry is everyday life — not only pastoral acts. At the radio station I am helping to put some satellite and automatic programming equipment into greater service. I have an electrical background but not one in communications. We have, however, already made progress with some of the equipment. God doesn't need a lot of brilliance — just willingness. The work at the radio station has been both a blessing and a challenge.

With preaching as my primary responsibility, I spend a lot of time in Bible study, devotions, and prayer. This is a great blessing. Later on I will spend some time preparing for the arrival of Pastor Tom and his family. I also hope to see a little more of Alaska's countryside.

Please pray for this church, the community, Pastor Tom Olson, and myself that Jesus may be lifted up and many may be saved.





# needs a *VISION*

— Brent Logeman  
Faith Lutheran Church  
Metropolis, Illinois

will bury our talent and fail to bear fruit. Vision inspires people to “take up the cross.”

Jesus had vision. He knew what He was to accomplish and Scripture tells us that He “set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51, KJV). His vision resulted in action.

It is not enough just to jump into action. We need to be doing the right thing at the right time in the right place. When Jesus determined to go to Jerusalem, it was a conscious decision to fulfill His purpose and not be sidetracked. He had a destination and looked ahead to its fulfillment. He could have taught and healed and done many more great works, but His vision of His purpose propelled Him onward toward the cross.

**Congregations  
without vision  
sometimes do  
good things  
but not the right thing.**

Consider the following illustration:

A demolition crew is to clear out part of a jungle in South America so that an airstrip can be built. The supervisor has the men hard at work clearing an area when the manager comes to review the work. The supervisor swells with pride when the manager tells him that he has made excellent progress. However, the supervisor deflates when the manager adds “but you’re in the wrong jungle.”

The supervisor knew how to clear out a jungle, but he did not have a full vision of what was to be accomplished. Is your congregation making great progress, but in the wrong jungle? Vision helps us to do that which we are called to do.

Prizes are not awarded to those who start a race but to those who finish it. It is not always easy to finish that which we

begin. We become tired or discouraged and lose sight of the finish line. Hebrews 12 tells us to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us.” We do this by “looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2, RSV).

We get our perseverance by looking to our Lord — our vision of Him and His example. Did Jesus ever have cause to be tired, to be discouraged, or to just quit? Yes, He was fully human, yet He endured the cross. How? Why? “For the joy that was set before Him.”

Jesus had a vision of the outcome even though it was yet unseen to man. We too must have a vision of the joy set before us if we are to continue in the race. Otherwise, when we become tired and discouraged and society criticizes us for teaching Scripture as God-breathed, we may begin to grow lax and compromise and soon fall into obsolescence. Our vision of the joy is not a wish or a dream. It is assured for those who believe. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, RSV).

God gives the vision and we believe. Therefore, we are able to endure and persevere.

The title of this article was originally “Why You Need a Vision for Your Congregation.” No person or group of people (lay or clergy) can superimpose their vision on a congregation and expect it to flourish. The vision must belong to the whole congregation. A congregation that has a God-given vision of how they are to witness and minister to their community can stand united in the face of persecution and trials and shine brightly in this dark world.

Our congregations will perish without vision. But God gives generously to those who earnestly seek Him. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13, RSV). Pray, fast, and listen to the still, small voice, then go forth!

**Where there is  
vision, God’s people  
flourish!**



# Vision 2004 update

The following questions and answers were stimulated by a Vision 2004 meeting. This represents the heart of the ongoing prayers, visions, concerns, and direction of the Vision 2004 Board and leaders at our AFLC schools.

Paul wrote in Acts 26:19, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." God had told him to be a minister and witness of what was revealed to him. "I will deliver you and send you to turn the people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:16-18).

## What is our purpose in Vision 2004? Do we have a heavenly vision?

Yes, and it is consistent with the original vision that started our schools — that the Word of God be the focus of every effort, preaching and teaching, preparing and sending. "By faith in Him, and love for Him, this school was established by action of the 1966 Annual Conference of the AFLC; that we might have the opportunity to study the Word and grow in Christian faith, under the guidance of dedicated, qualified Christian teachers, and in fellowship with other young Christians." That quote was from the grateful students who dedicated the first AFLBS yearbook to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! He gives us such a reason to press on!

## Do we plan to change our purpose?

No, we will continue to be a Bible school and seminary, the same as before. The teaching is solid. It still stands alone on the Word of God. We have no plans to be a junior college in five years, or ever. But we do want to be a strong Lutheran Bible school and reinforce our stands that the Bible is 100% true and that all people need a personal, saving relationship with Jesus. We also need to be ready for the projected increase in the seminary with buildings and staff to keep pace with these great ministries.

## Are we echoing the heartbeat of our forefathers?

Yes. We think about that annual conference in the 60s when people knew we needed to strengthen the seminary and plan for a Bible school. During the conference discussion, a gentleman got up and spoke about what had happened with kids at other church-related schools who had turned away from their Lord. He stood and cried, and could not finish. He didn't need to. Pastor John Strand said, "We know what you want to say — there is such a burden; we've got to get the school going."

The vote was strong, actually overwhelming. AFLBS started on three months' notice, with Ray and Olive Jacobson taking their camper around the country, recruiting 13 students that summer. We do echo the heartbeat of those dear conference attendees. We need to keep our schools going forward to meet the desire of our current students and the needs of future students.

## Is the message consistent with AFLC goals?

Yes, it is the same message. The methods may be different, but the Word of God remains consistent in its emphasis — in home missions, youth ministries, world missions, Bible school, anywhere students are being taught or are serving. The focus is on a personal relationship with Christ and spiritual growth.

## Are buildings and staff needed to keep pace with our ministries?

Yes, as the board of trustees reported at the 1997 Annual Conference, there are projections for greatly increased student population in both the Bible school and seminary. We may see up to 200 students in 1999. We have room for 150. The multi-purpose building and seminary housing are the main focus of Phase I. They are prayerfully considering a third-year mission preparatory option, possible video classes, and a goal of 100 seminarians to meet the growing opportunities in the AFLC.

When AFLBS teams, choirs, and faculty travel, people see where they stand. It brings the reality of our purpose to that community. Young people at these churches look to AFLBS students and say, "I want to be like that." We see Christian teens seriously wanting to grow in their faith and commitment. We have to respond. This generation has seen the previous two generations of materialism. Now they want to serve — yes, make a living and have families, too, but also to serve.

## AFLBS hosts Campus

On Friday evening, April 3, about 125 high school students converged on the Bible school campus at 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd. in Plymouth, Minnesota. The Friday and Saturday evening services featured a first — the speakers were Bible school students who are in Pastor James L. Johnson's Monday night Expository Preaching class. Gospel teams and student testimonies were also on the program. This semester is the first known time that AFLBS has offered a preaching class for its students. Pastor Johnson estimates there are about 15 Bible school men thinking about seminary.

## Isn't there enough room now?

No, with our current maximum of 150 students, we will try to fit the anticipated 160-170 students in next fall, by placing three students in rooms made for two. It's a short-term solution. Only God knows the future, but it is not unrealistic to expect 450 students at some point in time if the trend continues. The idea of adding another multi-purpose building does not originate from Vision 2004, either. Over 15 years ago there was talk about enhancing the campus with a gym and classrooms. It will offer a more conducive learning environment.

## So, any other visions?

Yes, more souls being saved, and us being prepared to educate them so they are equipped when going into the harvest. Pray with us that God may prepare the way as we work with the government officials, as He supplies finances, and moves us forward.



— Pastor  
Tonnes Pollestad  
Project Director

## Days, April 3-5

On Saturday morning the guests could select from three classes and three workshops to gain a better understanding of student life. Bill's Barbecue concluded the afternoon of touring and recreation. The campus days student committee planned and prepared for the weekend. The Saturday evening service ended with several coming forward for salvation and rededication.

"It's exciting to see the number of kids planning to attend Bible school," said Dean of Students, Mark Johnson. He added, "God is at work in the AFLC youth and we see the serious desire of young people to spend two years in God's Word at AFLBS."



**Pastor Brian Davidson with new members Luella Pierce and Lorita Davis of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Ponca City, Oklahoma.**

**Pastor Walt Beaman**, Fargo, North Dakota, has accepted the call to serve Pukwana Lutheran and St. Olaf Lutheran of Pukwana and Chamberlain, South Dakota.

**Pastor David Hesje**, Frontier, Saskatchewan, has resigned as the pastor of Bethel Lutheran where he has served since 1993, in order to accept a call to Morden, Manitoba. Pastor Hesje will be on loan to the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches. He expects to begin his new ministry in July.

**Rev. Harlan Johnson**, Stanhope, Iowa, who was on the AFLC Fellowship Roster, has been placed on the regular clergy roster.

**Rev. Robert Koepp** has resigned as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church of Running Valley, Colfax, Wisconsin.

## Director of Evangelism

The Commission on Evangelism announces that Pastor James Rasmussen, Park River, North Dakota, will begin serving as AFLC evangelist and Director of Evangelism on August 1, 1998. He will be commissioned at the annual conference in June.

Since 1988, Pastor Rasmussen has been serving in North Dakota at Victory Lutheran of Park River and Grace Lutheran in Edinburg. He also served as chairman of the Commission on Evangelism.

## Ground broken at AFLC Wilderness Camp

Construction will begin this summer at the Wilderness Bible Camp near Lake Park, Minnesota. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on May 9 for the large Morton Building that will serve as a chapel area as well as provide sleeping rooms for campers. Volunteers will later frame up and finish the interior partitions. Area churches will be informed of work days.

The camp, which in the past has been used primarily by those with RVs, will now be available to more people since both sleeping and bathroom facilities will be offered. Family Camp this summer is during July 14-19 with Pastor Terry Olson and Dr. Jonathan Strand as the main speakers. Amy Greene will be the children's teacher. An offered \$25,000 matching gift has nearly been met. We rejoice and pray for God's continued blessing on this project and ministry. Anyone wishing to donate to the project may contact the camp treasurer: Don Olson, 2825 N. 9 1/2 Street, Fargo, ND 58102.

**Rev. Lawrence R. Rasmussen**, 82, Whitewater, Wisconsin, passed away on March 16, 1998. He was ordained in the Lutheran Free Church in 1944 and served three churches in the Hampden, North Dakota area: Zoar Lutheran; Zion Lutheran in Alsen; and Prospect Lutheran in Derrick. This parish later became a part of the AFLC. Pastor Rasmussen went on to serve congregations in Michigan and Wisconsin and as a chaplain at Froedert Hospital in Milwaukee.

**Stacy, Minnesota** — Sunnyside Free Lutheran Church has acquired its first additional staff member. Jeff Carlson, a teacher with the St. Paul school system, has accepted the position of part-time music director for the growing congregation, which is served by Pastor David Keippala.

**El Cajon, California** — Rancho San Diego Lutheran began meeting in July, 1997, and has enjoyed God's blessings in their short history. They have seen their attendance steadily increase along with individuals coming to know Christ, be baptized and grow in His Word. They have been leasing a 2400 square foot upstairs room from the local fire department that has served their needs. The maximum allowable number for the facility is 49 people, however, and the average attendance for the congregation is now over 70.

On Easter Sunday Pastor John Kent joked during announcements that with the 108 people present, he hoped no one would inform the fire department. A few minutes later, one of the members of the congregation, who is a fire fighter, walked in the door in uniform along with his captain. He had brought his supervisor to the Easter service. A murmur ran through the congregation, but after the service, they all enjoyed a laugh together.

Pray with Rancho San Diego Lutheran as they seek a new worship facility, preferably one on the ground floor.

## Brazil team

On June 9, Anna Mattson, Emily Baker, Sarah Nystrom, and Ben Hagenbuch will leave for Brazil to minister until July 20.

Their first stop will be in Curitiba with Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel. From there they will travel by bus to Campo Mourão to work with Missionaries Connely & Carolyn Dyrud, David & Sarah Nelson and Sonja Dahl. While there, they will take a side trip to Iguaçu Falls, the largest falls in the world. Before returning home, the team will travel to Campo Grande to help Missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel in their church planting efforts. While in Brazil, the students will help with children's ministries, share testimonies and support the missionaries in whatever way they can.

The students on both teams are

## 1998 summer Free Lutheran youth teams



**Tanzania team members are Holly Roed, McIntosh, Minnesota; Jesse Purcell, Annandale, Minnesota; Tracy Lumpio, Eden Prairie, Minnesota; Don Zeh, Loveland, Colorado; and Rachel Jordan, Faith, South Dakota.**

### Tanzania team

The Tanzania team will leave on June 6 and return July 21. They will fly to Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, to begin six weeks of sharing and working in four church districts and institutions. The team which includes Jesse Purcell, Donald Zeh, Rachel Jordan, Tracy Lumpio, and Holly Roed, has been invited by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of

Tanzania — Mbulu Diocese. They also hope to visit the Serengeti Plains and enjoy seeing the wildlife.

Last fall, Dr. Norvald Yri and his wife Anna, Norwegian Lutheran missionaries, visited the AFLBS campus and shared the need to come to Tanzania and help. Dr. Yri teaches in the Bible school and Anna is a nurse at the hospital where the FLY team will work.



**Members of the Brazil team are Ben Hagenbuch, Utica, Illinois; Anna Mattson, Greenbush, Minnesota; Sarah Nystrom, Cokato, Minnesota, and Emily Baker Bloomington, Minnesota.**

funding their own trips, costing \$2500 each. There is no special fund set aside for these mission outreach opportunities. If you would like to help the students, you may send a gift to Summer FLY Missions Trip, AFLC Youth Min-

istries, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. Gifts can be earmarked for either team or for individual students.

The students ask that you would pray for them as they bring God's Word to each of these nations.

# **AFLC Annual Conference June 17-21, 1998 Red Wing, Minnesota**

Families please note:

There will be VBS and youth activities provided along with a nursery. Notify Our Saviour's Lutheran in Zumbrota by June 2 regarding the number of children and ages who will participate in these programs.

Write to 1549 East Ave., Zumbrota, MN 55992 or call (507) 732-5449.

**AFLC-Canada** requests prayer as they spend time in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia, surveying the community for a possible home mission work. The seven AFLC congregations in Canada have increased their home mission budget in anticipation of a new work starting in this suburb of Vancouver, only 30 miles from the AFLC congregation of Triumph Lutheran in Ferndale, Washington.

**Mesa, Arizona** — The support of the AFLC Home Missions Department has been requested for a new work in this community. A group, most of whom have Lutheran backgrounds, have been meeting for Bible study under the leadership of Eldwyn Van Bruggen. Their goal is to begin worshiping as an AFLC congregation by late fall, 1998. Anyone who is interested in this fellowship or knows of someone in the area who might be, should contact Eldwyn Van Bruggen at 602-854-0617 or at his summer home in North Dakota, 701-845-1832.

**AFLC Home Missions** — Trusting in God to provide, the AFLC Home Missions Committee is seeking to avoid borrowing in the future to pay subsidies that have been promised home mission congregations. Please be in prayer for them and the financial needs that exist. Please be regularly in prayer as well for pastors who are serving home mission congregations.



**Arlington, Washington** — Nineteen members were received into membership at Atonement Free Lutheran on March 22, 1998. Pastor Rick Long serves the former home mission congregation.

**Deshler, Nebraska** — Abiding Word Lutheran broke ground for their new church on March 29, 1998. The eighty plus members and friends of the congregation lined both sides of an 80-foot rope attached to a walking plow, symbolizing the desire of the congregation to pull together in all things. In three forward thrusts, the members repeated, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." As they called for the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon the

project, the plow broke deep into the ground.

Construction on the lot in the southwest part of town will begin as soon as weather allows, with completion planned in about nine months. The 4500 square foot brick and wood structure will contain a sanctuary to seat 114, Sunday school rooms and office, fellowship hall and kitchen for an estimated cost of \$200,000. The construction comes as Abiding Word Lutheran concludes its tenth anniversary year.

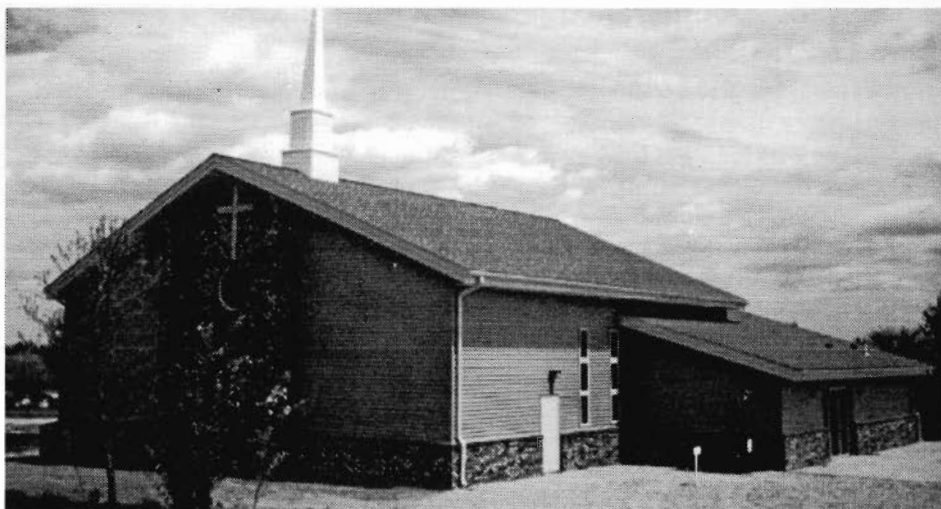
**Harvey Hoops**, building committee chairman, **Dean Hobelmann**, president of the congregation, and **Pastor Joe Schultz** stand behind the walking plow used in the ground breaking ceremony.





## Introducing two new congregations in the AFLC

**Living Word Lutheran, Windom, Minnesota** is one of eight congregations that have joined the AFLC since last annual conference. This southern Minnesota congregation celebrated its tenth anniversary on April 6, 1998. They rented the old John Deere building for worship during the first seven years of their life and the people became known as the John Deere Lutherans. They now enjoy their own building and have an average attendance of 62. They have a children's outreach program on Wednesday evenings. Last fall, the high school youth made a Sukkah, tabernacle dwelling, and invited the congregation to write Bible verses in it as part of their study of Old Testament practices and the Jewish heritage of the Christian Church. Dr. Richard Frederick serves the former AALC congregation and is on the AFLC's Fellowship Clergy Roster.



**Living Word Lutheran, Windom, Minnesota.**

**Windom, Minnesota** — Living Word Lutheran is in the same county as Comfrey, one of the towns badly damaged by the March 29, 1998 tornadoes. When news of the disaster came, the Windom Ministerial Association met to determine ways to aid the victims. Dr. Dick Frederick, pastor of Living Word, is the president of the ministerial association. A community concert of prayer for the tornado victims was held at which time an offering was received, which included Lutheran Brotherhood matching funds. A joint Good Friday service, Aid Association for Lutherans matching funds, and an offering from the LCMS congregation brought the total collected by the Windom churches to \$6,300. The aid was distributed directly to victims. God was at work in the community as twelve individuals made a commitment to Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord, during Holy Week services at Living Word Lutheran.



**Grace Lutheran, Buckley, Washington.**

**Grace Lutheran Church, Buckley, Washington**, joined the AFLC last fall after being affiliated with the Conservative Lutheran Association and most recently, was an independent congregation. In 1982, a fellowship group, most of whom had Lutheran Free Church roots, held their first service in a carport. The congregation dedicated their new church building in October, 1989, and serves the Buckley and Enumclaw communities.

Pictured at right is the congregation's pastor, Robert Olsen, in the costume he wore when speaking in the seven AFLC congregations in the Puget Sound area during this spring's Lenten pulpit exchange. The theme for all



**Pastor Robert Olsen as King David**

the sermons was Psalm 51. Pastor Olsen presented the biblical background of the psalm.



# Viewing life from God's perspective

**W**e are a little ways up a mountain and we can't see a thing. The trees are too tall and bushy. The fog is too dense. But God is up above. Nothing is in the way of His view. He sees everything clearly. He reaches down and wants to lift us up. He invites us to see what His view is like; to look at things from His perspective.

Fog can get so dense and night so dark that you can't see your own hand when holding it in front of your face. Sin in its darkness makes it impossible for us to even see ourselves clearly. It is necessary for us to look at ourselves from God's perspective. The view is both disturbing and encouraging.

God doesn't show us the whole picture. It is too ugly. He does show us enough, however, to make clear our sinfulness. He revealed part of the picture to David and it led him to make the confession that is true for each of us: "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5, NIV).

Seeing ourselves from God's perspective is humbling. We are not good people who are occasionally victims of unfortunate circumstances. We are sinners who do not deserve to stand in the presence of the holy God. We are worthy of death (Romans 6:23).

Before the view overwhelms us with guilt and despair, God expands the vision. He shows us that we are people who are forgiven when we are in Jesus. Our sin has been paid for at the cross. When we receive what Christ did for us, God looks at us as ones who are beautiful and acceptable to be called His children. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

When we are down in the fog we see ourselves either as clean by nature and not in need of Jesus' help, or dirty beyond hope. God wants us to see ourselves from His perspective: dirty by nature, but clean when we are trusting in Jesus who gave His life for us.

God wants to lift us up above the fog to get a proper view of others as well. We too often see them as problems that get in our way and mess up our pursuit of happiness. Those who don't agree with us

are seen as threats to avoid and enemies to defeat. Some are seen as doing fine and nothing for us to be concerned with. Or they just aren't seen at all.

Jesus "saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, NIV). People fill the field of vision when we look at life from God's perspective. They are seen not as worthless debris, but as works of art to restore, jewels to cherish. They are seen not as opposition to conquer but as valuable individuals to care for. Seeing people as God sees them means taking note of souls that are lost apart from the Lord, souls in need of being loved, souls Jesus died for and souls He can save.

Some people have a view dominated by what has gone wrong in the past. The only thing others seem to see clearly are the limitations of the present. Still others, as they look to the future, see only the potential for failure.

The gaze from God's viewpoint is aided by the promise that He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20, NIV). We see great things happening because He is the great God. As we look from God's perspective we see that the Lord can keep kids in a close relationship with Him from their earliest days. Seemingly hopeless marriages can be restored. The prodigal who has wandered from the Lord can

be brought back to the family of God. The church that is going nowhere can be led to somewhere great. The person whose talents are far from impressive can be used by God to impact their generation. It is impossible for the eye to see all that God can do.

We are like blind people who ask someone with sight to describe the scenery. The Lord has graciously done that for us. In God's Word we are provided with God's vision of ourselves, others and the days to come. It is by being in His Word that we can get out of the fog.

We go to His Word to seek a vision of God and to look at life from His viewpoint. It is then that we can become people of vision. It is then that we see more clearly where we are, what we are to do and where we are to go. It is then that we see sights that humble, inspire and amaze us.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**God wants us to see ourselves from His perspective: dirty by nature, but clean when we are trusting in Jesus who gave His life for us.**

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BUILDING THE BASE

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## The fish in God's aquarium — swimming in the depths

**I**n recent weeks, we have been shocked by the violent crimes committed in various parts of our country — the shooting of children in Arkansas, the slashing of teachers in Texas, and a senseless hostage situation in Idaho. The most sobering aspects of these crimes were that they were all committed by children, those whom we like to consider as innocent or good, rather than evil. And each incident was committed at a school, supposed places of enlightenment.

We live in a time and place of great moral darkness, reaching into the lowest places (children) and highest places (leaders) of our land. God's Word and standards are being removed from public life. Why does the Lord allow such darkness to surround His children?

Returning to our analogy of this world as God's aquarium and human beings as the fish in it, we can again learn from our underwater friends. If fish were able to reason, some sea creatures might wonder why God placed them where they are. They dwell in the deepest parts of the sea, such as the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean, 35,827 feet below sea level. Sunlight does not reach such depths.

How do these fish manage to live in such utter darkness? God has provided them with fascinating

ways to cope! Most have the ability to produce their own light in some way. The light comes from within. Some seem to glow in the dark. Some are almost transparent, like the Pygmy Roundmouth.

Likewise, we followers of Jesus, are called to bring the light, or rather, **be the light in our dark world!** Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Whenever we do the right thing, like returning change to a clerk after being undercharged or doing something right to our own hurt, it is like a breath of fresh air to those around us. That's bringing unexpected light to our world! People notice and wonder where our light comes from. It is light from within us as Jesus is allowed to shine through our lives.

Many of the fish in the deep have light organs that flash on and off in the darkness. They use these to attract and communicate. In a similar way we are to let the light of Christ shine through us so that others might be attracted to the Lord and the good news of Jesus is communicated.

These fish of the deep do not fear the darkness of their surroundings. So it is for us. Exodus records that the plague of darkness

descended upon Egyptian society — a darkness so thick, it could be "felt." But the people of God still had light in their dwellings. We possess His Word as our lamp.

Psalm 139:9b-12 promises: "If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand (Jesus) will lay hold of me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,' even the darkness is not dark to Thee, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee."

Jesus will make us lights to those around us that we "may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called (us) out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). The darker our surroundings, the brighter our light from the Lord will shine! Are you a "Jesus-fish" in the darkness of our society?



— Pastor Craig Wentzel  
Living Word and Zoar Lutheran  
Edmore, North Dakota