

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

May 21, 1996



**THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK ...
YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.**

Galatians 3:28

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 21, 1996
Volume 34, Number 7



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631

Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson
Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermstad
Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan.

CONTENTS

God looks at the heart	p. 3
ReconciliACTION	p. 4
Adoption	p. 6
God wanted me to stay	p. 7
Nominees for the 1996 Annual Conference election	p 12.

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.

For editorial inquiries and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, Box 423, Faith, SD 57626; (605) 967-2381; fax (605) 967-2382. E-Mail Craig JN @ aol. com.

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

Second-class 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

Jesus, the door of the sheep

Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep ... if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." — John 10:7,9b

Perhaps many of us are familiar with the old rhyme quoted with clenched fists, fingers interlocked and index fingers pointed upward: "Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the door and see all the people!" The theological problem with that illustration is that it is not the crude structure formed by our hands that is the "church" — the church is "the people" inside. In John 10:7 Jesus claims to be the door to the sheep — the door to His Church.

We may cringe at this thought, but in reality the Church is an exclusive group of individuals who can only gain admittance to that exclusive body by one way, namely through the door — Jesus Christ! Many "counterfeit doors" have been suggested and claimed as authentic but none of them save Jesus Christ alone allows one admittance to the true Church of our Lord!

What are the benefits of being among His sheep? The first benefit Jesus mentions is "he shall be saved." Palestinian shepherds sensed the importance of defending and protecting their flocks against dangers and predators. As we enter Jesus' fold by Him as the only door, we are saved from our own sin and its consequences. As the door that now stands between His own and an evil and cruel world and the devil himself, Jesus saves, protects and defends us!

A second benefit is that we

"go in and out." This does not mean that we fall from grace and return again, or that we leave the fold only to return when danger approaches. Jesus is also the Good Shepherd who guides His own always under His watchful care. Thus to "go in and out" speaks of freedom to follow to be all that we are intended to be as new creatures in Christ. We are saved "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness ... for you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Peter 2:24,25).

The third benefit Jesus mentions here is that we shall "find pasture." The true satisfaction of our soul is constantly threatened by the deception that the grass is greener on the other side of the door. That deception calls loud and clear with the passing of every day; but Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you ... I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall ... find pasture." In Psalm 63:1 David cries out, "O God, Thou art my God, I shall seek Thee earnestly ... in a dry and weary land where there is no water." There is no water — nor pasture — for any "sheep" outside of Jesus!

Christ's body is the Church; it need not have a steeple. Come through the DOOR, and be one of God's people!

— Rev. Les Johnson
Faith Lutheran
Lake Alma, Saskatchewan

God looks at the HEART

The pastor emphasized, "Racism is a sin." The contented Lutheran smiled, relaxed, and said to himself that finally there is a sermon for someone else. "I am off the hook," he thought. But the Holy Spirit had other plans for this upstanding member of the church.

John wrote, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, who he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 5:20-21, NIV). Whenever we stand in front of the Holy God, He measures us by the standards of His Word, not ours, nor by the current trends in society.

There is absolutely no room to wiggle out of it! If we claim to know Jesus Christ as our Savior, then there can be no room in our hearts for hatred toward someone of a different race, ethnic background, political party, economic class, social standing or religion. We may try to find intellectual reasons, but somehow, when we stand before the cross, pride and put-downs are simply more of the sin which our blessed Savior paid for with His blood.

The sins of racism and prejudice sneak into our thoughts and behavior like a cancer. Like a terminal illness, it destroys our spiritual life.

Many would argue and claim they are free of such prejudice. I felt that way myself when some of the Black History months were first presented. I wanted to protest and say that my ancestors were not even in the United

States until after the end of the Civil War. How could I be part of any race reconciliation efforts? While none of my forefathers participated in the slave trade, I needed to hear the pain and hurt of my neighbors who had no reason to trust anyone of my race.

Many AFLC congregations exist in rural areas or smaller communities which are entirely white. They are probably not that way because of design or a malicious effort. It would be hard to envision any of

our congregations forming a group to burn the black churches of rural Alabama; but what about our own innermost thoughts toward the Hispanic migrant workers, the African American children who are attending the public school with our children, or the Vietnamese family who operates a restaurant at the local mall?

Our society is rapidly changing and those neighborhoods and communities which once never saw a person of color are now having a mixture of people. How do we respond? Is there room in our church for anyone who does not look like us?

Fifteen years ago, I entered my first active-duty military assignment with several concerns. But one fear really plagued me. About thirty percent of those four hundred soldiers were African American. Would they accept me? How could I minister to them? I quickly learned that the men and women of African descent opened their hearts and lives to me and to the gospel much more rapidly than most of the white soldiers. They were quick to discern if I was a pastor in name only or if I truly loved the Lord.



**Acceptance
comes from
seeing all
people with
the eyes
and heart
of Jesus.**



— Chaplain
Timothy Skramstad
San Antonio, Texas

ReconciliACTION

— Rev. Dan Klug
and Stephen Lee

How can I help overcome racism? I have for years been interested in this question. Partly, because my parents stressed that God loves people of all races. My dad, Pastor Ray Klug, not only preached, but he and my mother Elaine, lived it. They opened our home to not only Native Americans and African Americans but even Swedes and Norwegians.

I have been challenged to take action after getting involved in Promise Keepers, the Christ-centered men's movement which promotes racial reconciliation starting with one person reaching out to another person.

Recently, I sat down with two pastors in my community who could answer some of my questions.

The Reverend Jose Rebolledo is the pastor of the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus. His Spanish-speaking Pentecostal congregation meets Sunday afternoons and Thursdays in our church building.

The Reverend Michael Cole is pastor of Gospel Outreach Ministries and is North Dakota bishop of the Church of God in Christ, the African American Pentecostal denomination based in Memphis. An African American, Cole's work includes several mission congregations on Indian Reservations.

Klug: Pastor Jose, have you experienced racism in our community?

Rebolledo: Personally, I haven't, but my daughter has in school. One of the

GOD LOOKS

Acceptance comes from seeing all people with the eyes and heart of Jesus. He died for the sins of the whole world, regardless of race or background.

Have you ever considered that not all people of a certain race have the same preferences or tastes? To be accepted by people of another background, we need to come as humble learners. Politely asking what life is like for them, what they are interested in, how they understand a certain situation, or what their opinion is can help to develop a friendship with people of a different or similar background to ours.

Labeling people ignores the truth. It simply is not true that all people of a certain race are lazy, dishonest, smell bad, or whatever else. Arrogance and pride are detestable in God's sight. When we paint a picture with such a broad brush that all people of a certain persuasion or situation are **anything**, it is almost certain not to be true. The only blanket truths are that all people are sinners and that Jesus Christ came to save all people.

A wonderful antidote for racism is to allow God to break your heart. Let Him search you and see if there is anything in your life that needs to be changed. If we allow the love and mercy of Christ's for-

giveness to enter our lives, we can then seek to love our fellow human beings. Ask God to help you see others with His eyes and you will soon discover that suspicion is replaced with Calvary love.

Our society has tried to rely upon laws such as the Civil Rights Act to do the work which can only be accomplished through the gospel. This is not to say that the laws were wrong, but one may observe that just because slaves were freed with the Emancipation Act in 1861 does not mean that people are able to love and accept each other. As long as man has a sin problem, the law will only reveal the sin for what it is. The gospel alone can change the sinners' heart.

The good church member who began listening to the sermon feeling justified had become more than uncomfortable. The Holy Spirit was working and now there needed to be confession of sin.

Racial reconciliation begins when the spotlight of God's Word is allowed to penetrate every corner of our hearts. Prejudice ends when we begin to see others as souls for whom Christ died. And finally, world evangelism begins with loving and praying for the neighbor who is so close to you, yet an eternity away. Are you willing?



kids called her an "illegal alien." And sometimes I have noticed people — the way they look or the way they act — you can tell.

Klug: Bishop Cole, have you experienced racism?

Cole: I grew up in North Carolina. When I was a little boy, they used to turn bulldogs loose on me and my brother. I was eight, my brother was six. We went home and said to grandmother, "Those white people ..." and she said, "Stop right

there. Those are God's children. You don't say nothing about 'em. If anybody deals with them, it will be God." I think that's why I'm sitting in the church today, because when I was eight years old, I was taught that.

Klug: Do you think racism is as bad in the church as in society?

Cole: I would say, it's sad they brought it into the church, but it's not uncommon, because Jesus Himself had to contend with racism. He met the Samaritan woman at the well and His disciples couldn't understand what He was doing. That had to do with a race problem; Samaritans were actually a mixed breed — half Jewish, half Gentile.

Klug: So it's an old problem. What can we do about it today?

Cole: By acknowledging there is a problem. We've been in denial too long. And we've tried to pray the problem away. But what we haven't done is repent and acknowledge that there is a problem.

Klug: Pastor Jose, are there some barriers in our churches that keep Hispanics from feeling welcome?

Rebolledo: Yes, first of all the language.

Klug: How can I as a white pastor understand the pain that racism causes?

Cole: Don't be fearful to get to know people. You get to know somebody, then you've got an inroad.

Rebolledo: The best way



first of all is to reach out to people. To befriend people. Help people in their needs.

Klug: Often I'm afraid that as I reach out, I might come across as condescending. How can I convey the fact that I care and love you and want to work equally with you to overcome this, and to confess sin?

Cole: That takes away a lot of pain when you say that. You may think, "I didn't do anything; I'm not responsible for racism." But if you want to bring parity,

there has to be reconciliation. And when you make that statement, believe it or not, it takes a lot of pain away.

After these interviews with Pastor Rebolledo and Bishop Cole, we've taken steps to get to know each other. We are also working together to reach our community with the message of reconciliation.

God has made us "ministers of reconciliation" (see II Corinthians 5:18). By reconciling us to Himself through Jesus, we are enabled to be reconciled to each other. Because of God's action through Christ, we can now take action. So, what can we do?

First, reach out to someone of a different color. Both Bishop Cole and Pastor Jose shared how meaningful it is when an individual reaches out in reconciliation. Take the time to get to know someone.

Second, find ways in which your church can reach out in reconciliation. How can you minister to other races? Our community has a large population of Hispanics, but because of the different language and cultural traditions, we found it

difficult to minister directly to them. So, we invited Pastor Jose's congregation to meet at our church until they are able to build their own. They have been very successful in evangelizing the Hispanic community.

Third, find ways to reach out into your community. How can you enable individuals

**Because of
God's action
through
Christ, we
can now take
action.**



ADOPTION

our family's experience

As Janet and I pulled up to our house in Vila Velha, Pam and Kevin Olson came running out the front door. They had come from Minneapolis to visit the AFLC mission field in Brazil and were spending some days with us.

"The baby's been born!"

For three months our family had been anticipating this day. After working four years in the Vitoria metropolitan area and seeing its large number of abandoned children, God gave us the desire to adopt some of them. It had been something we had talked about early in our married life and we were waiting for God's leading.

Our children were six and ten at the time and we discussed adopting with them. We felt we needed their full support. They were as excited as we were. We also talked with other adoptive parents and decided that a newborn baby would be best for us because of the ages of our children. Together we prayed for the child God would send us. Janet contacted at least one person, hospital or doctor a day

to inform them we were looking for a baby needing a family.

Now the day had arrived and our Melissa was waiting for us. We took clothes and diapers over to the hospital and got our first look at our little, curly hair Brazilian. Four days later, our lawyer drove up the street and dropped off Melissa at our home. The neighbors were all out to see her. Though we may have had some natural apprehensions at first, within 24 hours our hearts had bonded with this precious little one, even though the official adoption process in the Brazilian courts took another six months. For almost nine years now, Melissa has brightened our home with her sweetness.

Our experience encouraged others to adopt. Since we already had Melissa, we couldn't accept the other three babies that were offered us that same month. We did help place them in Christian homes. Our most exciting and challenging experience was helping Janet's sister from Cleveland adopt two little girls from the Vitoria area. Early in the process, we received a call from our neighbor late one Sunday night. A baby boy had been abandoned in the hospital and was at the home of a friend. Would Janet's sister be interested in him?

I returned late the next evening from youth camp. As I crept into our darkened bedroom, I tripped over a bassinet. "What is this, Janet?"

"I went to see the little boy, and he was so cute that I decided that if my sister can't adopt him now, I'll find a Christian home for him." Jonathan has been with us for seven years now, and we love him very much.

Our experience with adopting the two children has been a very positive one. We have openly discussed their adoption with them from the time they could understand and told them what a happy time it was for us when they joined our family. Several families in our church also had

RECONCILIATION

within your community to become active in reconciliation? In our area, we are planning a community reconciliation service. This will give individuals from various churches and ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to establish new relationships and reach out to each other in reconciliation.

Reconciliation is action. God demonstrated this by coming to us. So too, let us go in Christ's love and be reconciled to each other.



(Pastor Klug serves Christ the King Free Lutheran Church in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and Mr. Lee is the religion editor for the Grand Forks Herald. The above interview is an edited version of one that appeared earlier in the Grand Forks Herald.)



adopted or were foster parents so we felt our children were very well accepted. Because of our work with street children, our children were always around other adopted kids and they accepted their own situation very naturally.

Now that we live in the United States, some of the children's friends have not

had much contact with children of other countries. Yet I am so thankful to God for the way Melissa has answered their questions about being adopted in such a matter-of-fact way. We have the added blessing of living near our two Brazilian nieces, so our children are still around others who are just like them.

Our children became part of our family so quickly and completely that we rarely think about the fact that they are adopted. We just remember it when we're asked to share our experience with others — and a wonderful experience it has been!



— Rev. David H. Abel

(David and Janet Abel are presently serving Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in North Royalton, Ohio. He is also president of the "Christian Foundation for Mission Youth" which sponsors youth camps, ministries to children and evangelistic outreaches in Brazil.)

God wanted me to stay

Testimony of a pastor who has been serving the same congregation for 45 years

— Rev. John H. Dennis
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

When I was asked to write on a long ministry, and particularly on my own personal experience, my mind returned at once to my ordination day. It was June 18, 1950, with a congregation of 825 in attendance. With sunshine beaming through gorgeous mosaic-type stained glass, a setting of a sanctuary which would rival any cathedral of Gothic style, I heard my pastor, one of the greatest preachers I have ever known, preach upon the inspired Word of God. The text was Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

I had been baptized and confirmed in that congregation. I had a medal for my Sunday school attendance and had been in Luther League and choirs. Now the great day had come: I was to

be ordained in the Christian ministry. The pastor challenged me to give my life for Jesus Christ in a total way.

It was March of my senior year in seminary that I was handed a call to help with a struggling mission congregation near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When I asked for information, the district president said: "It is not very Lutheran. It was not begun correctly. The church has missed its first payments to the district treasury, but there are good possibilities here."

After a visit, I truly felt that the church I have now served for over 45 years was where God wanted me to be. And here I am. I have been the first installed pastor at Ruthfred Lutheran.

I cannot tell anyone why I have remained here so long. I have had fourteen written calls to go to other congregations. We have been through building programs.

Fourteen young men have gone into the ministry. We support many missionaries, and I would be willing to say, I have just stayed on. The romance of the ministry has simply caught me by the heart. I have loved every moment of being a servant of Jesus Christ and the pastor of this fine congregation.

One of the great sadnesses of my ministry was when, after much prayer and study, we decided to leave the Lutheran body which we left two years ago. But in reality, we left that body when in 1960, our beloved American Lutheran Church left its very conservative moorings to join with two other Lutheran groups.

One of our professors, Dr. E. C. Fendt, warned us as his students against always looking for greener pastures. He said, "The strongest churches I know have



STAY

had three pastors in 100 years."

I was reared with a pastor who stayed 28 years and the next one stayed 35 years. I did my intern year with a pastor who stayed 41 years and, by God's grace, built up the largest congregation in the former ALC (before the 1960 merger).

To give some loving advice to pastors who change and change, always looking for something different to, perhaps, supersede what they have, or perhaps are just tired of certain personalities and the hackneyed expressions and routing of the sameness of life: I say always pray; always be willing to be used; always have one message in your sermons — Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and coming again!

I have found, to be personal, that people are responsive in their treating a pastor in about the same measure as the pastor treats them. As Jesus came to minister, so we also come to minister. As Jesus came to give His all, so we too give our all. I never take a day off in the week, have had very few vacations and love every moment of my experiences as a servant of God. And above all, I have been truly blessed by the Spirit of God for He has been with me all the way.

At times a pastor loves where he is and there is no reason in the world to leave there, but the Spirit of God prevails upon him to do so. He has no choice. With me, since this is a personal testimony, I have never felt a call away from here which would seemingly afford me the joy and the opportunities which the Lord gave me here. We are all different and God is gracious, kind and totally loving. We are certainly on the right road when we walk with Him. May Jesus Christ be glorified by anything that you may find of help in this article.



HOME MISSIONS Prayer and Praise

Andover, Minnesota — Maranatha Free Lutheran has a Vision and Goal Committee re-evaluating the vision for the congregation and seeking God's will for property and location. The congregation continues to rent worship facilities and is served by Rev. Tonnes Pollestad.

Chillicothe, Illinois — Our Savior's Lutheran will not be receiving Home Mission subsidy for one year beginning in June, 1996. Rev. Jerome Nikunen, the congregation's pastor will continue to serve the congregation half time while working as a chaplain at Methodist Hospital in Peoria.

Mr. Owen Myhre, Abercrombie, North Dakota, was recently injured in a home accident. He is recovering from the burns received. He served on the AFLC Home Missions Committee for two terms, ending in 1992.

Oceanside, California — Neighborhood Bible Church, served by Rev. Orville Heipler, has an active Pioneer Club for children on Wednesday evenings with over 50 attending. The congregation began a pre-school last September and has reached their maximum enrollment. On May 17-18, the youth group traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, on a Jesus Film project.

Rev. Paul Nash, Home Missions director, spoke at several services during April 26-28, at Hope Lutheran in Ishpeming, Michigan. Pray for God's protection as he travels and for his continued good health.

Palmdale, California — Rev. Christian Andrews has been recently hospitalized and he continues to have health concerns. He serves Shepherd of the Valley Free Lutheran Church.

Different yet so much in common

What an eye-opening experience! I saw a whole new world that I never knew existed when I went to the Czech Republic late last year with my husband. Our intentions were to share Jesus and "encourage the brethren."

We stayed in the homes of three families for a total of 14 days. We were so blessed to see the faith of these believers. They have a deep and sincere love for our Lord. They don't have all the material things that we do. Their homes have all the necessities but very few of the extra conveniences that we enjoy. I did not see microwaves, dishwashers or clothes dryers. They ate lots of breads and potatoes. Fresh fruits and vegetables are imported and very expensive.

I was impressed with how they cared about each other as family

members. Children were respectful to their parents. There was nothing pretentious about them.

While in their homes, they included us in their daily family devotions. After Scripture reading we all got on our knees around the furniture and had a beautiful season of prayer. Though we didn't understand their language, we sensed they were walking closely with our Savior and knew Him personally. Years of communion and secret house meetings had strengthened their faith.

Most of the adults could not speak English, but many of the young people could and we always had an interpreter with us so we were able to communicate. Dale spoke at a youth rally for 60 teenagers. Like our American youth, they love to sing, laugh and eat. Even though we spoke different languages I realized how

WORLD MISSIONS

What holds five adults, seven children, two dogs, two cats, and always an extra visitor or two? The Paul Abel house during the month of February. We moved in with the Abels to learn about the work we would be caring for while Paul and Becky went home on furlough. As we watched their non-stop schedule we were overwhelmed with the needs in this area. How would we ever fill their shoes? What



What size shoes do you wear?

would happen to the churches when they left? Who were we to be taking on this task anyway?

As Becky quietly reminded me at the breakfast table one morning, Jesus promises that His grace is sufficient for us. He doesn't call us to do more than what He provides the strength to do. He also gives each of us different gifts to be used in His kingdom's work. We quickly learned that we don't possess the same gifts as Paul and Becky. We also are learning more about the gifts that God has given us and how to put them to use within this culture.

During our first year in Brazil, we have been blessed to be mentored by both the Connely Dyruds and the Paul Abels. Recently we

had the joy of visiting with Jonathan and Tamba as they returned to the field. We may not always see things eye to eye, nor do we have the same gifts and talents. What do we have in common? The love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are all deeply committed to seeing His gospel spread within this country. We also love each other from the heart. Being far from home and family helps us see our need for one another and the reality that we are on the same team. We share what we have with one another, but our shoes we keep to ourselves. The Lord has given us each our own custom-fit pair.



— Mrs. Sarah Nelson
AFLC missionary to Brazil

much we had in common. They too want to be loved and accepted. It was obvious there were deep bonds of friendship within their group and they loved to tease and have fun with each other. The common thread binding us together was our love for Jesus.

I had the privilege to teach twelve times in the public schools. I taught a children's sermon and presented the way of salvation using the "gospel bracelet," giving each child a bracelet to keep. Dale spoke 29 times at various churches and Bible studies during our 14-day visit.

We returned home tired but with a renewed zeal to communicate the love of Jesus to others. Our hearts are grateful for the freedoms and multitude of blessings we enjoy here in America.



— Mrs. Cris Finstrom
Maranatha Lutheran
Glyndon, Minnesota



Recently, major repairs were completed on some of the church buildings of the Bible Faith Lutheran Church in India. The BFLC churches are located on the eastern coastal plain. That area is frequently hit by cyclones. Completed repairs include a slab roof being installed on one of the buildings. This is the most sturdy of roofs and is least affected by storms. Pictured is the church in Chinavarur with the entire clay tile roof removed to replace one of the roof beams (palm tree trunk) which had cracked as the result of a severe storm.

Two AFLBS students share

Coming to America

My name is Elisabeth Gilje, a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and my hometown is Gilja, Norway, a village near Stavanger. Why did I come to America to attend Bible school when we have good ones in Norway? I had the desire to travel, learn English and do something different. Also my second cousin had graduated from AFLBS in 1994 and she told me how great it was. I saw that she had grown in her spiritual walk with the Lord and I wanted the same for my life. So ... the Lord brought me safely all the way to Minneapolis in September, 1994.

I was both nervous and excited as the first day of classes arrived. Would I be able to understand the teachers and classmates? Would they understand my English? Should I take notes in Norwegian or English? Would they be able to pronounce my name right?

Philippians 4:6 came to mind: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by

prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God." After a few days, I realized that I had nothing to worry about. At AFLBS everybody was Norwegian (at least one-fourth Norwegian) and they all knew some "Norwegian" — even Christmas songs. I can't say that it felt just like home, but it was close.

These two years at AFLBS have been the most memorable years of my life. I thank the Lord for sending me here. Right now, I am looking forward to the choir tour as we depart on May 20. One of our sixteen concerts will be in my hometown. After the tour, I will stay in Norway and go to college. It will be sad to leave everybody here in the U.S., but I know that: "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20,21).

My name is Julia Makarova and I am from Jurmala, Latvia, one of the three Baltic Republics. This is already my second year at AFLBS and I sincerely regret that this time flew by so fast.

I still remember my first day in America. I was quite prepared for my arrival because Latvian schools teach a lot about other countries and the media informs people about things abroad. However, I was not prepared for my first impression of the American people. I was amazed to see so many people smiling. Unfortunately, in my country now you would not see a smiling face too often. Americans are generally very nice and kind and I am

blessed by God that He has given me many friends who share their love and hospitality.

Another thing I noticed was that the lifestyle in America is very different from what I am used to. People seem to be in a hurry all the time trying to get as much as they can from the day. It is like the earth here spins around its axis faster than anywhere else.

Upon my arrival on campus, I needed help and moral support right away. Those days were the hardest time in my life. I was very homesick far from my family and friends and speaking a language hardly anybody could understand. In spite of the loneliness, I felt happy and peaceful

AFLBS summer teams announced

Ambassadors

Amy Jo Hill, Radcliffe, IA
Elizabeth Welsch, Amery, WI
Rochelle Landblom, Dickinson, ND
Ben Monseth, Rogers, MN
Scott Mundfrom, Greeley, CO

Majesty I

Tara Cherney, Tucson, AZ
Sarah Olson, Dickinson, ND
Heidi Quam, McIntosh, MN
Wade Mobley, Lake Preston, SD
Tim Jore, Brazil

Majesty II

Michele Deubner, Brockton, MT
Lynae Strand, White Earth, ND
Deb Kirk, Larimore, ND
Nathan Stover, Larimore, ND

BARNABAS

Marnie Anderson, Ames, IA
Holly Roed, McIntosh, MN
Janelle Quanbeck, McVie, ND
Dave Chamberlain, Fargo, ND
Ben Beubner, Brockton, MT

*One more BARNABAS team is being formed. The Ambassadors team travels nationwide presenting concerts while the others minister up to a week in one camp or congregation.

deep in my heart. Isaiah 40:29 says, "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

Now two years later I am ready to graduate. The Bible School means so much to me that I would need to write another article to describe it. But I can say only one thing and it should be enough: the Bible School has brought back my hope and faith. God renewed my strength through His mighty Word and the Holy Spirit. And now wherever God leads me I'll go there with the promise: "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 31:8).



CAMPUS

Norway choir tour, 1996

May	June
22 — Oslo	1 — Kallenseidet
23 — Orje	2 — Bergen a.m.
24 — Porsgrvn	Voss p.m.
25 — Randesund	3 — Geiranger
(Kristiansand)	4 — Ulsteinvik
26 — Mosby	5 — Vigra
(Kristiansand) a.m.	6 — Alesund
Storekvina p.m.	7 — Sykkylven
27-28 — Dirdal	8 — Lillehammer
29 — Sandnes	9 — Oslo
30 — Bryne	
31 — Moster	

Two interns begin ministry in June

Seminarian Tom Schierkolk will begin serving the Grace and Zion Free Lutheran Parish in Valley City, North Dakota, on June 1, 1996. He will work with Rev. Joel Rolf. Seminarian Marshall Nessa will serve with Rev. James Ritter at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota for six months before completing his internship at Campo Mourão, Brazil, with Missionary Connely Dyrud.



1996 AFLBS Concert Choir on tour in Norway May 20-June 10. (Row 1, L. to R.): Rochelle Landblom, Dickinson, ND; Elisabeth Gilje, Norway; Tara Cherney, Tucson, AZ; Brenda Salvevold, Battle Lake, MN; Amy Greene, Grand Forks, ND; Rachel Fugleberg, Fargo, ND; Marnie Anderson, Ames, IA; Gretchen Linder, Buxton, ND; Tami Fugleberg, Roseau, MN. (Row 2): Mr. Jerry D. Nelson, Champlin, MN; Melissa Strand, Wahpeton, ND; Tami Abel, North Royalton, OH; Amy Jo Hill, Radcliffe, IA; Solveig Buer, Norway; Elizabeth Welsch, Amery, WI; Renee Behne, Wheatland, IA; Sarah Olson, Dickinson, ND; Tami

Caouette, Brooklyn Park, MN; Ingrid Dyrud, Middle River, MN. (Row 3): Ryan Carter, Kandiyohi, MN; Mark Haugen, Cokato, MN; Ben Nelson, Kandiyohi, MN; Jason Strand, Wahpeton, ND; Eric Rasmussen, Park River, ND; Jeremy Erickson, Roseau, MN; Jason Sanford, Story City, IA; Ben Monseth, Rogers, MN; Noah Skogerboe, Bemidji, MN; Nate Avant, Brooklyn Park, MN. (Row 4): Scott Mundfrom, Greeley, CO; Chuck Sever, Dupree, SD; David Dummermuth, Chesterland, OH; Steven Lombardo II, Morris, IL; Tim Jore, Brazil; Ben Deubner, Brockton, MT; Jesse Reith, Amery, WI.

Nominees for the 1996 Annual Conference elections

Coordinating Committee

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Terry Olson, Dickinson, ND
 Rev. Dale Mellgren, McIntosh, MN
 Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Ron Knutson, Kerkhoven, MN
 Rev. Ken Moland, Kirkland, WA
 Layperson 5-year term
 Marlin Benrud, Goodhue, MN
 Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, MN
 Layperson 4-year term
 Vincent Larson, Buffalo, ND
 Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, IA

Board of Trustees

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Harvey Jackson, Hatton, ND
 Rev. Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls, MN
 Layperson 5-year term
 Wayne Floan, Fertile, MN
 James Peterson, Colfax, WI

Youth Board

Pastor 4-year term
 Rev. Alan Arneson, Badger, MN
 Rev. Tim Carlson, Wheatland, IA
 Layperson 5-year term
 Jeremy Larson, Fargo, ND
 Duane Twedt, Lakota, ND

Board of Pensions

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, SD
 Rev. LeRoy Flickinger, Newfolden, MN

World Missions Committee

Layperson 5-year term
 Karen Knudsvig, Buxton, ND
 Kermit Berge, Larimore, ND

Home Missions Committee

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Harris Van Someren, Winger, MN
 Rev. Ray Klug, Blackduck, MN

Stewardship Board

Pastor 2-year term
 Rev. James Fugleberg, Fargo, ND
 Rev. Del Palmer, Thief River Falls, MN
 Layperson 5-year term
 Lawrence Brown, Jr., El Campo, TX
 Joel Hanson, Webster, SD

Board of Publications and Parish Education

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Dennis Gray, Greenbush, MN
 Rev. Martin Horn, Astoria, OR

Commission on Evangelism

Pastor 5-year term
 Rev. Joel Lohafer, Ferndale, WA
 Rev. Thomas Olson, Barronett, WI
 Pastor 4-year term
 Rev. James Rasmussen, Park River, ND
 Rev. Wendell Johnson, Cambridge, MN
 Layperson 2-year term
 Michael McCarlson, Webster, SD
 Raymond Stromstad, Beltrami, MN

Association Retreat Center Board

Layperson 5-year term
 James Ray, Esko, MN
 Dale Bentley, Mounds View, MN
 (Nominees for corporations and the 1997 Conference Committees will not be made until June 19, 1996.)

— *Nominations Committee*

Rev. Raynard Huglen, Chairman
James Rolf, Secretary



Deshler, Nebraska — Members of Abiding Word Lutheran joined with over 150 people to erect the impressive display of 4,500 white crosses in a field along the heavily traveled Highway 81 in Thayer County, Nebraska. These rows of crosses created a vivid remembrance of all the tiny victims who die every day in the U.S. as the result of legalized abortion. The crosses are a project sponsored by Nebraska Lutherans for Life.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Rev. Rolf Heng, Fertile, Minnesota, has announced his retirement and resignation as pastor of Resurrection Lutheran in Beltrami, Minnesota.

Seminarian Tim Johnson, a 1996 AFLTS graduate, has accepted the call to serve Resurrection Lutheran in Beltrami, Minnesota, beginning in June, 1996.

Rev. John Rieth, Vadnais Heights, Minnesota, will begin serving this summer as chaplain at United Hospital in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Chaplain Rieth is a member of Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, North Dakota.

In memoriam

Ella Waterman, passed away on March 15, 1996. A memorial service was held March 20 in Wautoma, Wisconsin. She was the mother of Rev. Gordon Waterman, Tomball, Texas, pastor of Crown of Life Lutheran in Houston.

Eleanor Mae Lee, 79, Escanaba, Michigan, passed away on April 25, 1996. She was born September 11, 1916 in Palmer, Michigan, to Benjamin and Emily (Vicary) Leece. She married Lloyd Lee on December 31, 1939. She was a member of the Escanaba Free Lutheran Church. She is survived by her husband; one daughter, Mrs. Sam (Carol) Boyer of Alpena, Michigan; one son, Rev. Robert (Gloria) Lee of Crystal, Minnesota; four grandchildren and one sister, Carol Anderson of Marquette, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her parents, three brothers, three sisters and an infant daughter, Lois Lee. Funeral services for Eleanor Lee were held on April 27, at the Anderson Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Orville Jensen officiating. Burial was in the Gardens of Rest Cemetery.

Greenbush, Minnesota — United Lutheran's monthly family night service on April 14 featured Rev. Wayne Juntunen, Grafton, North Dakota, who shared slides of his recent mission trip to Eastern Europe. The following Sunday, United had "Friends Day Worship" as an encouragement to invite someone to church.

Rev. Les Galland, Eden Prairie, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of King of Glory Lutheran and Faith Lutheran in Shakopee in order to accept the call from Calvary in Everett, Washington. Pastor Galland will begin his new ministry in June. He is the chairman of the AFLC Coordinating Committee.

Four AFLC churches receive AAL Milestone grants

Four Association of Free Lutheran Congregations have received grants from Aid Association for Lutherans to celebrate significant anniversaries. The congregations are: Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minnesota for 125 years; Tordenskjold Lutheran, Underwood, Minnesota for 125 years; Union Lake Lutheran, Winger, Minnesota for 100 years; and Bethany Lutheran, Brodhead, Wisconsin for 125 years.

Southern District Women's Retreat, Lake Whitney, Texas, was held May 3-4. Mrs. Eunice Will, Springfield, Missouri, spoke on the theme "Women Doing God's Work."

FOR WOMEN

May Bible Study — Showers of blessing

Although the first settlers placed a high priority on establishing churches, people soon became careless about hearing and keeping God's Word. Faithful evangelists called the prodigals to repentance and the ensuing revival had a profound effect on our country.

Voices today cry for revival and many pray that it will come soon. No instruction for prayer is more clear than II Chronicles 7:14:

"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Pray for the 1996 WMF Convention and the AFLC Annual Conference in Stanwood, Washington, June 19-23.

The WMF Project of the Month

is the General Fund. The budget for 1996 is \$27,000. This fund helps projects which do not reach their projected goals. It is used for administrative expenses, printing and mailing costs.

WMF In Memoriams

Otto Rust, Bruce, SD
Lyle Olson, McIntosh, MN
Beryl Willard, Pukwana, SD
Erwin Reuther, Missoula, MT
John Simpson, Valley City, ND
Bob Iverson, Sisseton, SD
Ellen Neilson, Sisseton, SD
Loulla Jorgenson, Tioga, ND
Robert Radway, Philip, SD
JoAnne Badgley, Bothell, WA
June Kimber, Henning, MN
Marguerite Topp, Juanita, ND
Marion Dahlgren, Silver Bay, MN
Caroline Jacobson, Springfield, MO
Roy Gustafson, Williston, ND
Violet Varland, Morris, IL
Esther Brekke, Culbertson, MT

What does your group do?

I have often been asked, "How do you run a youth group? What do you do?" Every youth group is different because the youth are unique, but maybe we can get some new ideas from other groups that are active.

T.N.T.

Tuesday Nights Together
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, PA

Brenda Stilley is the youth leader at their church. They meet every Tuesday from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and this is what they do.

6:30 p.m. — Summer sports addicts come to play softball before the meeting.

7:00 p.m. — Milling moments, "how was your week? Did you pass the math test? Did you see that cute guy over there?"

7:15 p.m. — Crazy game or singing, they are still working on the music end.

7:45 p.m. — Share/Care time, "this is the burden that I've been carrying"

8:00 p.m. — Teaching time, "did you know that the Bible says"

8:15 p.m. — Small group, "let's talk about it. How does that apply to my life. Does that mean that I should"

8:45 p.m. — Announcements/Skits, "here it comes, get ready, let's go!"

8:50 p.m. — Circle prayer, "squeeze the hand next to you when you are done."

AFLC Wilderness Family Camp Lake Park, Minnesota July 9-14, 1996

Speakers — Rev. Tom Olson, Bible Study leader
Evening speaker to be announced

- Bring your own tents and trailers.

Youth Notes

Planting Seeds

My children planted seeds in Sunday school this spring. Each one had a cup filled with dirt. Each one pushed a seed into the dirt and covered it up. Each one watered it with care. My oldest son was proud that his was the first and that it had two sprouts. The second cup had one sprout that came up at almost the same time. My daughter was also proud of her sprout that was beginning to grow. The third cup did not have a sprout. My son Andrew felt bad and wondered why his plant was not growing. About a week later a small green shoot came up out of that third cup, but this plant was different from the others. It was unique and that made it special.

Our youth are like those plants. Each one is unique, each one is special. Some grow quickly; others do not. The rate of growth and the type of person that they emerge as is the Lord's work. Our job is the watering and caring for those young lives. This is a critical task because

life-long convictions are formed before they graduate from high school. If their growth is stunted during those years it will have a lasting effect.

One of the ways that youth are cared for during those teen years is the youth group. It is in the youth group that they find the encouragement they need to grow, biblical answers to life's challenges, and a personal experience with the Lord. It has been exciting to hear how youth groups are growing. Some are growing in spiritual depth while others are growing numerically. Several youth groups started out with five to ten youth and now have grown to 15 to 20.

As spring planting is underway, remember the need to grow the youth of our congregations. I pray that every youth in the AFLC would have a youth group that they could attend weekly with committed leaders. And I pray that every district would be reaching out to the youth without Christ. How can you help grow the youth in your area?

— by Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

9:00 p.m. — Those that want to, go to "King's" for a late night snack.

Let us know how we can help.

AFLC Youth Ministries
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55441
612-545-5631

Prayer Requests

- The finances of the AFLC Youth Ministry. This is an area that our people are not use to supporting and yet it is so very important.
- Praise for the large turnout at Campus Days and the real devotional attitude of the time spent there.
- Praise for the many spring youth rallies and the lives that were touched.
- Pray for the ten summer Bible camps. Pray for the students, speakers, and counselors.

EDITORIALS

Call it what it is

A poet said, "A rose by any other name is still a rose." A different label does not mean a change in substance.

Sin is not a pleasant label to attach to our behavior. Therefore, we search for other terms to describe our attitudes and actions. It is "sociological" or "genetic" or "the result of my upbringing." To call it sin sounds so harsh.

Racism is something we have tried to describe with other terms and cover over with other labels. It is long past time to call it what it is: sin.

The message of Scripture is clear. To see someone who is of a different race or has a different color skin as being of less value to God, less of a special, unique creation of His and less loved by Him is sin. "For God so loved the world ..." (John 3:16, NIV). "God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth ... who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (I Timothy 2:4,6, NIV). "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him" (Romans 10:12, NIV).

We make excuses. They sound reasonable. "I've never lived around Hispanics before." "A bunch of black guys beat me up and robbed me once." "My father was a racist."

None of the excuses are good enough. It is sin to judge an entire race on the basis of the misdeeds of some. The fact that our parents were sinful does not take away our responsibility. A limited exposure to a

certain group of people does not mean we are permitted to make improper judgments about them.

The way we view people is not to be determined by how much or what type of exposure we have had to people of that race or ethnic group. It is to be determined by what the Word of God says about all people.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (II Corinthians 5:10, NIV); skin color makes no difference. "Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all" (II Corinthians 5:14, NIV); skin color makes no difference. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view" (II Corinthians 5:16, NIV); skin color makes no difference. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17, NIV); skin color makes no difference.

The race problems we face in this nation are, as Tony Evans said at the Promise Keepers National Clergy Conference, at the core not political or economic or sociological. Neither will they be solved by those means. It is a sin problem. It is the sin of pride and the failure to see people the way Jesus sees them. It needs to be confessed, repented and the forgiveness of God enjoyed. The grace and power of God needs to be sought and relied upon. Our miracle-working God is the only One who can bring true healing and unity.

The problem is serious, but God is greater still. The answer is found in Christ alone. Let us model that answer for our needy world.

Everyone is welcome

Once when I was a youth we were giving someone who had visited our church a ride home. They asked, "Is that a Norwegian church?" My mother wasn't real pleased with the question and was quick to say, "No!" and then start to list all the people in the congregation who weren't Norwegian. This was coming from a lady who was 100% Norwegian and who had married a man who was the same. She would not trade her heritage for any other, but she definitely did not want her congregation to be viewed as only open to those who were like her. She wanted everyone to feel welcome at our church.

Is everyone welcome at your church? Even if their skin is a different color, their native language has a different sound, their food has a different taste and their clothes don't look anything like yours? If they came to your church door, would they feel you wanted them to stay or leave?

One of the first obstacles the early Church had to face involved race relations. The Jews did not want

to be in the same group as Gentiles. Gentiles were different. Jews did not want to reach out to them.

God spoke strongly to Peter and the other early believers. They became convinced "that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34,35, NIV). Do we share the same conviction today? Do our actions indicate that we do?

We may say that those of a different group are welcome ... if they happen to come our way. The call of God is to do more than be polite if they show up at our door. We are to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19, NIV). That means going to the Asian family living down the street, the Mexican farm worker, the Black business owner and the Native American laborer, telling them the good news of God's love.

As God came seeking after us to invite us to come to Him, let us seek to invite others, no matter what their skin color or ethnic background may be. We are all wanted by God. We are all welcome to join the family.

BUILDING THE BASE

Quickening preaching

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

The Christian congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth. It is made holy by the indwelling Holy Spirit. But since it exists on earth consisting of individuals who are not what they ought to be, the congregation is also not what it ought to be. Some members of congregations have strayed from the faith. Others, whose heart of unbelief is known only to God, are taken into the membership of the congregation. In addition, believers within the congregation are prevented by the old nature from following God's will perfectly.

The New Testament shows clearly that such was the condition of congregations even then. But such fellowships do not cease to be congregations simply because sin is still found in them. Instead, they are called upon to be cleansed from all that is profane. The Christian congregation is not to be content with sin in the lives of its members.

According to the fourth principle of the AFLC Fundamental Principles, "the congregation (is) to purify

itself by the quickening preaching of the Word of God, by earnest admonition and exhortation, and by expelling the openly sinful and perverse." In cases where the openly sinful will not repent and turn from sin the church is commanded, "Expel the wicked man from among you" (I Corinthians 5:13). Such a person is to experience personally what separation from God's love really is and be moved to repent. Before that extreme action, however, and for the continual daily purifying of the church, the quickening preaching of the Word of God is to be employed.

Quickening means life-giving or life-producing. The term is used to describe the preaching of the Word of God. The Word of God is quickening. Jesus said, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Peter writes of believers, "You have been born again ... through the living and enduring word of God" (I Peter 1:23).

Not all preaching is quickening. Preaching that is not the Word of God may be inspiring and motivating, may be entertaining and interesting, may bring tears or laughter, and indeed may draw crowds and accolades; but it will not bring life. By it the congregation will not be purified. Only the Word of God has the power to give life to the dead, to bring true conviction of sin

and produce sincere faith.

The faithful preacher of the Word must constantly guard against the thought that it is up to him to make the preaching quickening, as if spiritual life depended on the preaching rather than the Word of God. He can make it interesting or dull, entertaining or motivating, but he cannot make it quickening. He must preach the Word of God. Then the preaching will be quickening. Article V of the Augsburg Confession states it succinctly: "Through these (the Gospel and sacraments) he (God) gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel."

You who listen to preaching, what do you desire? Do you praise your pastor for messages based on their entertainment or motivational value and thus tempt him to preach accordingly? Ask for the Word of God. Thank him when he brings you the Word of God. Receive that Word and live in it.



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