

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 22, 2001

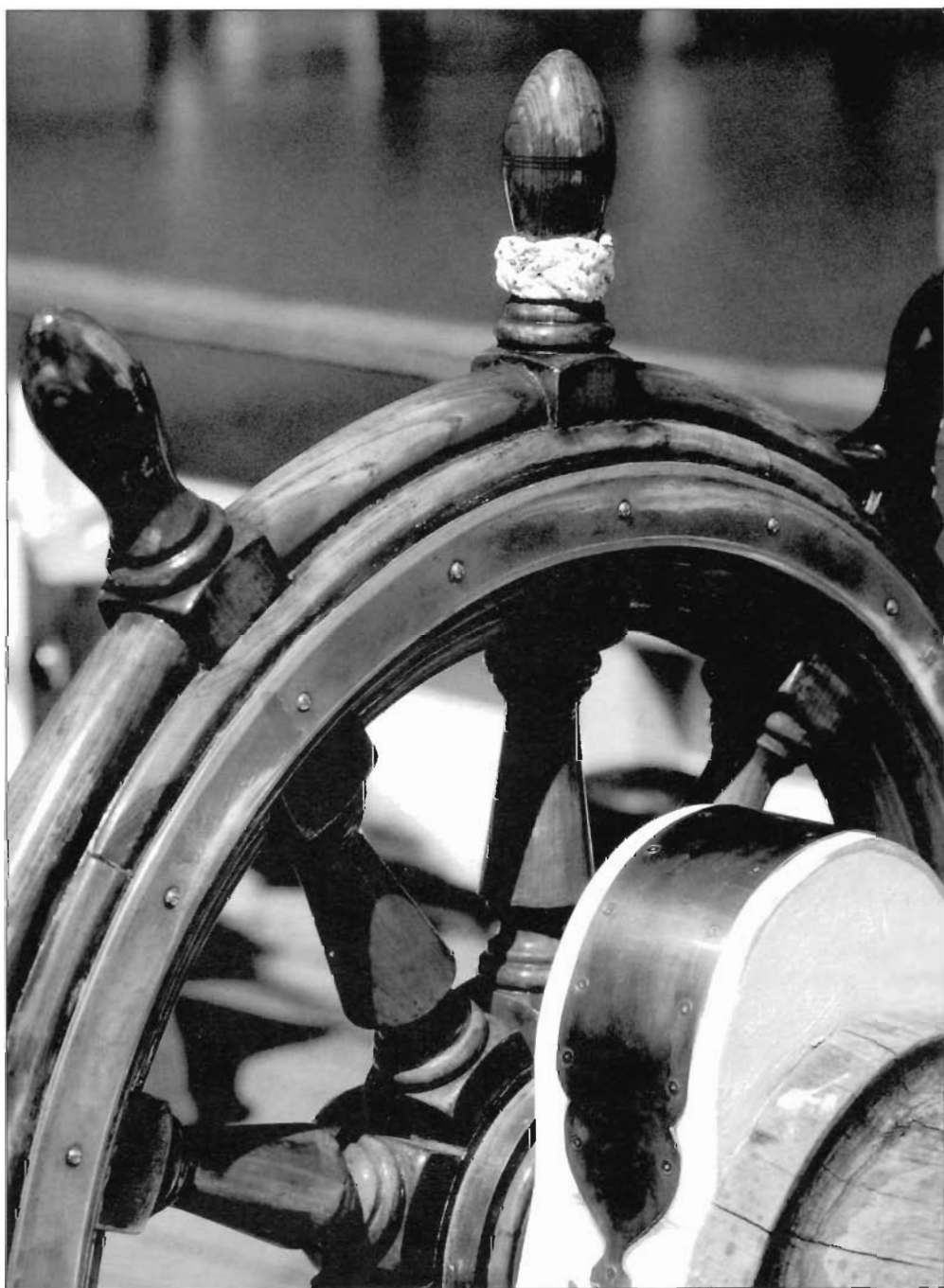
I have known
God's light and
warmth since
infancy. p. 4

Were it not for
God's amazing
grace ... p. 5

Those unspoken,
yet powerful
testimonies ... p. 6

My mother's and
sister's prayers
were finally
answered. p. 7

The priest who
discovered God's
Word. p. 10



**For such is God,
Our God forever and ever;
He will guide us until death. — Psalm 48:14**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 22, 2001
Volume 39, Number 7



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

Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson

Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermstad

Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan, Rev. James L. Johnson.

CONTENTS

Taught from infancy	p. 4
Without God, I'd be a mess	p. 5
The quiet ambassadors	p. 6
Happy in the Lord	p. 7

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 446,
Bruce, SD 57220-0446; 605-627-5188;
fax 605-627-9254;

e-mail craigj@teleport.com

wshjerm@brookings.net

For subscription changes and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E.
Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Min-
nesota 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at
luthamb@aflc.org

Subscriptions rates:

\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18.00 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis,
MN and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine

AN ENCOURAGING WORD

God's lighthouse

Along the shore of Lake Michigan, in Door County, Wisconsin, one can find several quaint lighthouses dotting the landscape. They were placed in strategic locations to guide the incoming ships safely to harbor. Their light warned of obstacles along the way, as well as pointing out the safe passage.

In this issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, the focus is "testimonies." Just like that lighthouse shed its beam for the purpose of bringing the ship safely into harbor, so we as God's children are to be lighthouses in this world darkened by sin. As we share testimonies we reflect the beams of light that Christ has shed abroad richly in our hearts. Listen to the words of Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Too often, Christians get the idea that "shining for Jesus," is totally their responsibility. Let me ask you, what makes a lamp worthwhile? When it is plugged into the power source and the switch is thrown. Just as a lamp cannot shine unless it is plugged in and the switch is thrown, so we as God's lighthouses cannot shine unless we have been plugged in as well! The current needs to pass through us, lighting the filament within our soul. God has provided the means whereby this is possible. Like Mary, in Luke 10: 38-42, so we too need to sit at Jesus' feet and drink freely from His Word.

There we find the current that lights the filament.

As the moon reflects the rays of the sun back to earth during the dark of night, so we as God's children are to reflect His light in this world in which we live. We needn't come up with our own light; we simply reflect the light He has already placed within us. This takes away the worry of wondering what to say or when to say it. God has already supplied the message. God will also provide us with ample opportunities to pass it on.

We are more effective witnesses when we become portraits of the beauty God is creating in us than when we merely paint a bleak picture of human degradation. God is constantly at work within us, trimming our wicks, so that His light, in us, may not be obscured. What a marvelous privilege God extends to us to shine for Him. It is the greatest compliment ever paid to God's children; for in it Jesus exhorts us to be what He Himself is: "The Light of the world."



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

Sound Bites

It is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good

1 before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ also says, “A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:18).

—Martin Luther

4 God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our consciences, but shouts to us in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

—C. S. Lewis

6

It is in the schoolroom of solitude and obscurity that we learn to become men and women of God.

—Charles Swindoll

2

When we wish for God to do miraculously what we refuse to do by obedience to His Word, we denigrate the power of prayer and life-changing message of the cross.

—Craig Dumont

When in my thoughts I dwell upon the incalculable and unspeakable riches which have been showered upon me since I became a Christian, my desire is that each one of you might also become a Christian.

—O. Hallesby

3

5 The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.

—Elisabeth Elliot

Taught from infancy

— Fern E. Bohling
Abiding Word
Lutheran
Deshler, Nebraska

A number of years ago I heard a story that involved two people, one was in a dark cave and the other was sitting on the hillside.

As the sun rose, the one on the hillside watched it as it made its course across the sky. Later the other emerged from the cave and was ecstatic at the brilliance of the sun. Both saw the same sun (Son) and both were filled with its brilliance and warmth even though both experienced it in a different way.

My experience has been one of sitting on the hillside. I have known the light and warmth of my Lord and Savior for as long as I can remember. As an infant, I was brought to the baptismal font by my parents, adopted as a child and heir through that act of God. Timothy was taught “from infancy (to know)

the holy Scriptures which are able to make (me) wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15; see also II Timothy 1:5). In retrospect, how thankful I am that my father started our day with family devotions and prayer and that my mother read me Bible stories and listened as I recited the memory work. It was never questioned if our family would be in church for worship, Sunday school,

and other times of instruction and fellowship. We attended as a family with our parents who often served the Lord as Sunday school teachers and in other capacities.

God has graciously placed Christians in my life that have helped me grow in the faith given by Him. I am reminded of Corrie ten Boom’s statement: “I have not a great faith but a faith in a Great God.” With praise to God, I was stimulated through pastors and teachers. During confirmation instruction, I developed a strong love for the Lord and a desire to serve Him.

God has a marvelous capacity to put puzzle pieces together and from our church community, God chose to put one of those biggest pieces together as He bonded Lavon and me. Through our marriage, spanning two-thirds of our life now, God has been with us through joys and sorrows, through health and sickness, through three children and their descendants. We continue on the journey, taking new turns and twists along the way, as God puts stepping stones before us and sometimes pitfalls to help us look up again. Through all of this, Lavon has truly become my spiritual leader. With much human error, we strive to fulfill the beautiful balance that God created for man and woman as stated so well by Paul in Ephesians 5:23-23.

Throughout my adult life there have been many that have touched me as I attended Bible studies. What prayer warriors are in that army of God! I am thankful for the “cave-dwellers” in my life who have seen a life-changing experience in their relationship with God. They help me to again focus on the light of the Son and fuel my excitement for the Lord as they fervently share their experience.

I, who had nothing to do with my natural birth, or my being born again as a child of God, sing praises to Him that “by grace (I) have been saved, through faith — and this not from (myself), it is a gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Many by God’s grace, have had a part in molding my Christian life and I live to pass on the blessing. What a joy to sing “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so” to my grandchildren!

Thank you, dear Jesus, for that faith to know and to have life here and in eternity (I John 5:13). Amen.



**The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?**

**The Lord is the defense of my life;
Whom shall I dread? — Psalm 27:1**



— Danny Chavez
St. Olaf Lutheran
Montgomery, Illinois

Without God, I'd be a mess

Had it not been for the amazing grace of God, my life would be a complete mess. I never looked for God. He was only a passing thought every Easter and Christmas. My parents were good people, but they never forced me to believe in anything spiritual. We seldom went to church or even talked about spiritual things. I grew up without knowing about Jesus' love and His atoning death on the cross for me.

By the time I was in junior high, the world began to influence my life. I found myself making my own morals. As Proverbs 16:25 says, "There is a way that seems right

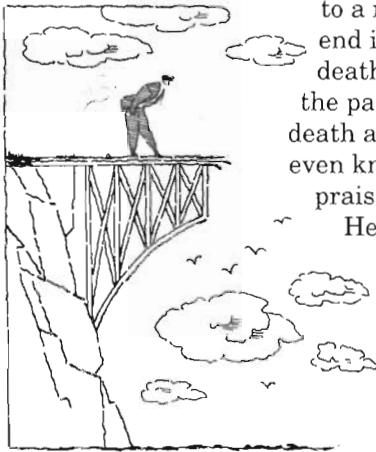
to a man, but its end is the way of death." I was on the path leading to death and I did not even know it. I

praise God that

He did not

leave me in that state.

The Lord began to make Himself real to me during



my junior year in high school. It all began when I attended an Easter church service with my friend's family. During the service I felt uncomfortable. I did not belong. I had no clue when to stand, when to sit or even how to recite the Lord's Prayer. I left the church feeling terrible and vowed to never go to church again. Nevertheless, that day, God sparked my curiosity about things of the Lord. I asked Him for answers.

Then one day as I was walking to school, God decided to really reveal Himself to me. No there was no manifestation of Himself right there on the street, but He did something just as miraculous. He gave me His Words. A Gideon was handing out New Testaments to students entering my school. Everyone seemed to be taking one, so I did

as well. Little did I know that little green New Testament would change my life.

I started to read it once in a while so that I would not be so ignorant about Christianity. The words of that Book cut into my heart. I remember reading it and putting it down because the message so penetrated my heart. "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). I never felt so bad and so good at the same time. The Holy Spirit was showing me that I was a sinner worthy of hell and at the same time I knew that Jesus loved me. The Word convicted me of my sin and brought me face to face with the Son of God who died for me. In my bedroom on April 26, 1996, I asked the Lord to forgive me of my sin and to take over my life. He did.

Since that day I have not been the same. I joined a local church and fellowshipped with their youth group for the remainder of my high school years. Through the church's faithful teaching of the Word of God, personal devotions, and the pastor's willingness to mentor me, I grew in knowledge and understanding of the Lord and His Word. I studied at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School after graduation and now serve as the youth director at my church. I also now attend Wheaton College. To this day the Lord is still transforming me. Condemnation has been replaced with mercy in my life. I now have God Almighty on my side and His promises of a new victorious life in Christ are personally mine.



He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said,

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." — Matthew 16:15-16

The quiet ambassadors

— Clara Gunderson
Cambridge, Minnesota

It was a warm summer evening. We returned home from our Sunday service at the church. Lillian was quiet. As that was my own nature, I was comfortable with the silence. Moreover, I was a youth and she was my mother.

As we walked up the front sidewalk she stopped, turned to face me and said, “I just can’t stand up in church and give a testimony, and I can’t pray out loud.”

When I recall that experience, I realize now that she was speaking very honestly and frankly with me. I know she must have been trying to sort out feelings of inadequacy, disappointment and self-recrimination.

As I reflect on that incident, I have had an avalanche of feelings and other scenes from my childhood. One, I see Mother with her Bible and coming upon her while she was in prayer. I am reminded that I am whom I am due in large part to her prayers and her daily walk with the Lord. I see her turning the other cheek, walking away from an explosive situation. I can see her at her sewing machine making dresses for her girls late at night after the other work was done. I see her teaching a class of noisy children, and cooking at Bible camp and other large gatherings. Her voice still rings in my ear as she cautions me to “be a credit” as I go off with my friends. I hear her singing. I see her purse as she reached in to help me out. I see the pain in her eyes when I disappointed her, or, when I took advantage of her gentle nature. I remember the mixture of pain and joy as she released me to follow my call from the Lord to go to the foreign mission field. And I feel yet the warmth of her arms, welcoming me back some years later.

Second Corinthians 5:20 reads, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we

beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Lillian, my mother, was God’s ambassador to me. Through her as His quiet ambassador, He was making His appeal to me to walk as His child, being reconciled to His way, and showing me how. Her life gave testimony to His power.

There have been other quiet witnesses in my life who, like Mom, did not have courage to talk publicly, but who gave evidence of God’s love and faithfulness by their deeds. Once started, it doesn’t take much effort to remember them and how God used them.

Evelyn — the mother of a good friend in my youth who spoke candidly to me of a fault easily taken care of once I knew about it. She has a spiritual gift of exhortation.

Doris — intuitively recognized in me an interest in missions and who provided the opportunities. She taught me how to teach with her own spiritual gift of teaching.

Ella — let me dirty up her church office using the mimeograph machine, teaching me all she knew about being a church secretary because she saw my potential. As we worked she talked to me about God having a plan for my life, the importance of praying about it, and finding His place for me. She herself had done this and found contentment, fulfillment and joy. God used her spiritual gift of encouragement in my life.

Irene — had me help her care for her children over several years during my teen years. She mentored me as we talked about the right and wrong of social activities that were being questioned. We chatted about boys and her own marriage was a clear witness of love, companionship, loyalty, getting along, and being quick to forgive one another. Irene was calm, with the spiritual gifts of understanding and counseling.

Like Lillian, these ladies were not quick to respond in public meetings. I may have heard only one or two of them pray. They were, however, definitely God’s ambassadors to me — Spirit-led women, walking and talking quietly in various stages of my life. The woman in I Peter 3 could win an unbelieving husband by her chaste and respectful behavior and by the “imperishable quality of a gently and quiet spirit.” These personal heroes were used by God to win me over to walk in a manner worthy of Christ’s death.



"Through her as His quiet ambassador to me, He was making His appeal to me to walk as His child, being reconciled to His way, and showing me how."

None of us really knows all that an ambassador in a foreign country does each day. Surely he or she attends public functions, sitting along side other dignitaries. We know through the press when an ambassador takes part in something noteworthy, but we don't know the hours spent filing reports, participating in committee meetings, or talking on the phone. Neither do we know the amount of energy our fellow Christians put in to their Bible reading or their prayer time. We don't know their giving habits. We don't know the words of encouragement, or exhortation they speak quietly as they walk alongside someone. Yes, the ambassador may be quiet, but that doesn't mean he is silent. Nor does it mean he is insignificant.

It has been good for me to think back on these ladies and remember that their light shone brightly before me, bringing glory to their heavenly Father. I wonder if I ever let them know? Though Lillian and Ella have been with the Lord many years, Evelyn, Doris and Irene's lights still shine. I think I'll write them a note this afternoon and tell them thanks.



Happy in the Lord

— Tilman Kjellesvik
Bethlehem Lutheran
Morris, Illinois

I accepted Jesus as my Savior on my birthday when I was seventy-two years old. Now two years later, I feel blessed. I am learning so much how to interact with people and to understand the real meaning of love. Previously I used to shy away from people. I was a loner.

My health has been poor these last seven or eight years and I have been in and out of the hospital often. About two years ago, I was seriously ill and it caused me to think. I asked myself, "Where will I go when I die, heaven or hell?" Romans 1:21 says, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." I got the message and God gave me the greatest birthday gift — eternal life.

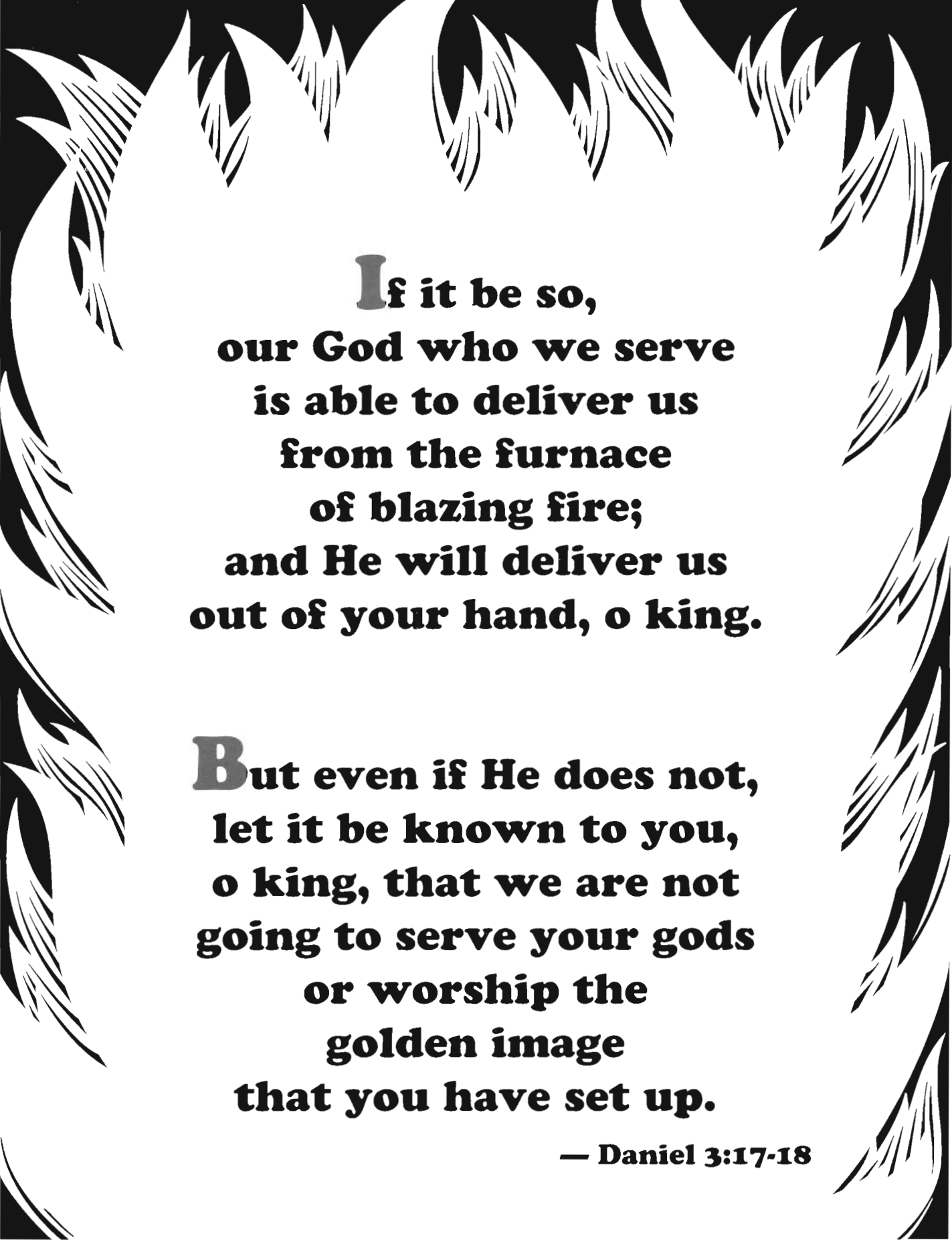
When I was younger, I liked to party. I would get paid on Friday then party and gamble over the weekend and on Monday, I would be broke.

Although I knew about the Lord as my parents taught me, I never did know Him personally. I didn't have time for Him. I don't recall ever reading the Bible or any other book for that matter. But the Lord, with His patient love, kept me safe all those years, until I accepted Him as my Savior. My mother's and sister's prayers were answered.

I pray that anyone who reads this testimony, if you have not accepted the Lord Jesus that you will do so. Don't wait like I did. It's too much of a gamble. The stakes are too high. Your very soul is at stake. Please accept Him. It's a wonderful life! I know.



**And as for me, I know
that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take
His stand on the earth. — Job 19:25**

A decorative border of stylized, white flame-like shapes against a black background, framing the central text.

**If it be so,
our God who we serve
is able to deliver us
from the furnace
of blazing fire;
and He will deliver us
out of your hand, o king.**

**But even if He does not,
let it be known to you,
o king, that we are not
going to serve your gods
or worship the
golden image
that you have set up.**

— Daniel 3:17-18

I was angry with God, But He was gracious to me

— *Patty Peasley*
Word of Life Lutheran
Mankato, Minnesota

I became furious with God. I was completely devastated and thought my life was over. The pain and anger I felt was so deep I thought it would never heal. I looked for answers and only until I came to the end of myself did God bring me up out of my pit.

When I was young the only dream I ever had for when I grew up was to be married and have as many children as I could. Even as a child I felt I had a motherly instinct. I had a heart for children. Part of my dream came true. I married, but in three years and five months I was divorced and childless. My dream had ended.

About twelve years later God blessed me with a foster child. For three-and-a-half years I was the mother I had always dreamed of being. But the best years of my life ended with the adoption of that child into another home. At that time, there were very few single-parent adoptions being granted. A family member of the boy was also seeking to adopt him and a minister told me that I should back off and not fight it. If I fought and lost I may never get to see him again. I didn't fight but instead let the courts decide.

I was angry at God for taking away the only child I would ever have. I walked away from the Lord and wanted nothing more to do with Him. I sadly thought I was so smart and never needed help. I was wrong.

I came to a point where nothing mattered anymore. It seemed to me not one living soul on the face of the earth cared if I lived or died. I was at the end of my rope and I was in a pit so dark and deep that nothing was going to lift me out. Nothing.

In happier days I had made a cassette tape for myself to play in my car. It had two songs on it that were repeated over and over again.

One of the songs was entitled, "There's a Light at the End of the Darkness." The other song was "Why me Lord?"

When I got in my car that dark, hopeless night to end it all by driving off a bridge, that was the only tape in my car. Normally I had 10 or 20 tapes in my car at all times. I made several trips to the bridge, all the while hearing that tape play over and over again. Then something happened. I heard a voice. Not an audible voice but a voice just the same. It wasn't the right time or place to do what I had in mind. I had to go home and start over.

The suicidal thoughts did not leave me easily. Nor was life any easier at first. I went through many more tough times before the Lord's message actually began to sink in. It all began very slowly.

I helped with a children's Christmas program at church. I was an unwilling helper and I stayed as far away from the children as I possibly could. I would never allow myself to get too close to anyone ever again. The pain was just too unbearable.

As time went on I started getting into the Word again and I began to loosen up a bit. I helped out with the children more than I had before and I started to get to know some of them. God was slowly melting my hardened heart. The Lord was giving me a new heart — one that had

an even deeper love for children.

Almost thirteen years later I am still amazed at the ways in which the Lord has brought me out of that pit and into the light. The tunnel had no light when I entered it, but the Lord saw me through it, all the way to the brightest light of all — Jesus!

First Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Be joyful always; pray continuous-



ly; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." When I finally learned to give thanks for the blessing of having that child for the time that I did, and stop being angry about the adoption; I was able to start becoming the person God intends for me to be. I have a long way to go and being thankful in every circumstance is extremely difficult at times, but I am learning, growing and enjoying the ride.



For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,

— Luke 2:30



— Enrique Fernandez
as told to Ruth L. Temple
Faith Lutheran
Durant, Oklahoma

A priest who found peace with Jesus

Until 1961, I was a Roman Catholic chaplain in a tranquil village in Spain. My only duty was to celebrate mass. In my free time I studied, read and listened to music. Usually I visited the village priest after an early supper. He was an older man who was companionable and friend-

ly. He was a man of simple tastes and full of sympathetic understanding toward a young priest.

One night he showed me a pamphlet titled, "The Unspeakable Gift," written by a Canadian ex-priest, John Chiniquy. I asked to borrow it and that night I eagerly read its pages.

The pamphlet created an intense

desire to read more. I wanted to know if there is a difference between the Catholic and Protestant Bibles. I wrote to the Holland address on the pamphlet, requesting a Bible or a New Testament. To hide my identity, I gave my address merely as "Monastery Street."

A New Testament arrived and I began to study it, especially Acts and Hebrews. As I did, a conviction grew that the Roman Catholic Church had deviated from the Bible, and that its priesthood had usurped Christ's place of priesthood for Christians.

The discovery of the Word of God became a thrilling adventure for me. As I continued reading, I felt the cutting reality of Hebrew 4:12 that "the Word of God is quick, and powerful."

In the Bible I saw the story of God's bringing salvation to sinful men. How completely different from what I'd been taught.

Born in Madrid to devout parents, I entered a Catholic seminary at age 14. I remained there for eleven years before being ordained into the priesthood in 1954. During my four years of theological studies, I had never seriously read the Bible. Among the priests, the Scriptures were only consulted as a reference book in the study of Catholic dogma. I knew only parts of the Bible; those included in the mass and the texts in the Roman missal. These last were the basis of my Sunday sermons.

Salvation, church authorities said, depends on absolution of sins by the priest, and whoever refused to confess his mortal sins to his confessor was eternally condemned. I could find neither in Acts nor in any other New Testament book that this was so. All the sacred writers insisted that man must go directly to Christ for forgiveness.

In Hebrews I read clearly that Christ had been offered once for sin. Then I said, how dare Rome declare that Jesus Christ offers

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able what I entrusted until that



that He to guard have to Him day.

— II Timothy 1:12

Himself daily in the sacrifice of the mass? I found that the doctrines of justification and salvation were by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). I reasoned, "If I had not found peace of soul in the Catholic Church, could it be perhaps because I expected to gain it as a reward of my own efforts?" The New Testament was a message of peace and not a burden heavier than the obligations imposed in the Old Testament.

My inner joy grew daily as I read the Word. I longed to share these discoveries of truth. I thought of Margarita, my childhood companion. She was studying philosophy and letters at the University of Oviedo. I also knew she wanted more than anything else to please God in all she did. She often prayed all night long. I was certain that we were good enough friends that she would not betray me to my superiors. So I wrote her. I urged her to read the New Testament. She did and her surprise was as great as mine was. Before long, she wanted to read the evangelical literature which I had read. Our exchange of letters dealt with our new discoveries in the Word as well as the viewpoints brought out in the different books.

One afternoon I suddenly understood the source of the hidden treasure I was seeking. Jesus Christ asked nothing of me, but offered me everything. His love filled me with his grace and freely deposited within my soul all His gifts. There remained nothing more but to accept Him — to believe in Him.

I relinquished all my own effort to gain salvation. I abandoned myself in the hands of Jesus. In that instant, He became my only and all-sufficient, personal Savior. I felt the Holy Spirit's presence and knew I was united with Lord Jesus in an eternal union. That was my new birth.



(Ruth Temple was a missionary to Costa Rica and ministered in the jungles in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. This article is taken from a series of stories which originally appeared in Sunday school papers about 30 years ago. Used with permission.)

Ascension Day May 24, 2001



To these He also presented Himself alive, ... appearing to them over a period of forty days, ... And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" he said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by

His own authority:

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

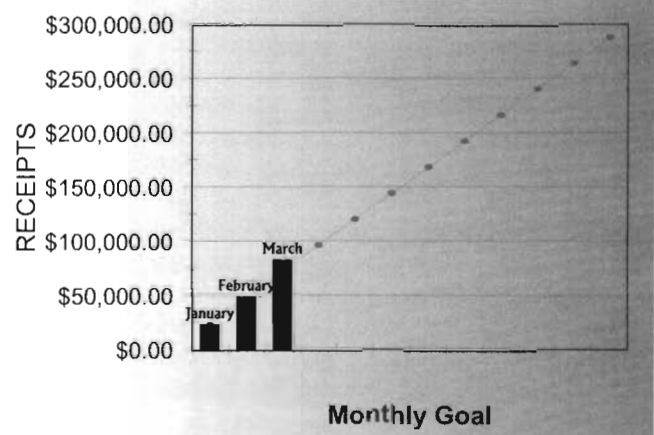
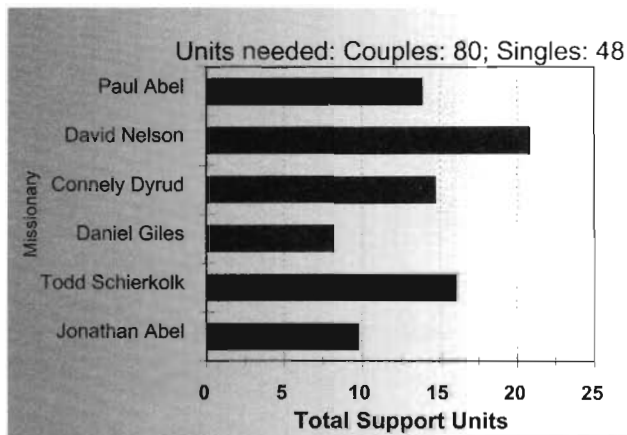
And after he had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing,

behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

— Acts 1:3-11

Personal Support Units

January - March 31 (3 months)



Personal support graphs for AFLC missionaries

Interested people and congregations have been encouraged to designate financial support toward one of our missionary families or individuals. This program has grown since we began. We have seen an increasing amount of funding that comes from our donors and is specifically directed toward the support of a specific missionary. People are encouraged to make a heart of faith commitment to the Lord with regard to their support of AFLC missionaries.

A few years ago this category of support was removed from those funds that were identified as part of the budget. As the AFLC Budget Analysis Committee met in recent years these funds were identified separately and were not included in the funds they considered. Therefore, they were not presented as a part of the funds requested of the annual conference on behalf of world missions. The presumption has been that these funds would be there because people would promise this support and therefore it would not have to be presented to the annual conference and the congregations.

Since the beginning, the needed funding for missionary support has been much less than 100 percent. We have felt the need for developing

and communicating more effectively the funding needed in the area of world missions.

The graph shows monies received through the end of March for each missionary. The personal support program calls for 80 units of support for each missionary family. One unit is \$600, which amounts to \$50 per month per unit. The 80 units figure is used

with all missionaries at the present time.

As we are moving ahead with missionaries in different locations with different needs we are discussing the need to fine tune the program with varying numbers of units depending on the particular needs.

—**Pastor Eugene Enderlein**
AFLC World Missions Director

AFLC officials visit Africa

Pastor Eugene Enderlein, AFLC World Missions Director, and Lavon Bohling of the Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters and the AFLC Home Missions office left for Nairobi, Kenya on April 27. From Nairobi, they traveled to Kampala, Uganda and spent about a week visiting AFLC friends in that country. The Free Lutheran Seminary has already accepted two Ugandan students for the 2001 fall semester. They are with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Uganda, a group of 40 congregations that was organized in 1995. Mr. Bohling evaluated some of the physical needs in conjunction with his work with non-profit grants.

After May 7, the two men visited with Dr. Norvald Yri and friends at

the Haydon Hospital in Arusha, Tanzania. The FLS has also accepted two students from that nation for the fall term of 2001. After a week, they returned via Nairobi, after visiting other Christian organizations in and around that city.

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson had applied twice for a visa to allow them to continue ministering in Portugal, a country known for making it difficult to receive such papers. The Nelsons were finally granted their visa request and at the end of April thankfully traveled to Vigo, Spain to have the visa stamped on their passports. The renewal of this visa next year can be done in Lisbon, Portugal.

Sri Lanka — Pastor M. Sathiyathan, president of the Lanka Lutheran Church died suddenly on April 8, 2001. He was active in developing communications with the AFLC and hosted the delegation from the AFLC last January.

Jerez, Mexico — Missionaries Dan Giles and Todd Schierkolk are busy with their church-planting ministry in Jerez. They are using a Christian video club each week for children in two areas of the city. On Sunday afternoons they pass out salvation tracts and church invitations in the city which is teeming with people shopping in the market.

Pastor Leroy Flickinger, Thief River Falls, Minnesota is serving as interim pastor of Badger Creek and Oiland Lutheran parish in Badger and rural Greenbush, Minnesota.

Pastor Ted Berkas, Wallace, South Dakota is serving as the interim pastor at Calvary Lutheran in Wallace.

Pastor Richard Larson, Abercrombie, North Dakota resigned as pastor of Bethany Lutheran and United Lutheran of rural McLeod where he has served since 1990. He accepted the call to Faith Lutheran of Fairbury, Nebraska, and expects to begin his new ministry on August 1, 2001.



Gracia Berge, AFLBS junior, enjoys coed softball on the campus diamond. Early applications for fall 2001 are coming in at a strong rate. Preliminary indications are for another year of increased student enrollment.

Illinois District camp scheduled for late July

"Truth Matters" from John 17:17 is the theme for the 2001 Illinois District Family and Youth Bible Camp. Lake Geneva Conference Grounds at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin will host the camp during July 22-26, 2001. Evening speakers include area pastors and laymen: Pastor Don Greven, Pastor Jeff Swanson, Don Davidson and Rick Tollefson.

For more information contact: Stan Larson at 815-942-2699.

Galilee camp summer schedule

Galilee Bible Camp at Lake Bronson, Minnesota is preparing for a full summer camp schedule. The camp is owned by a non-profit corporation of members in area AFLC congregations and governed by a 12-man board. It was originally owned by people in the Lutheran Free Church who began planning it in 1939. The first summer of use was in 1954. In recent years, some of the camp has been remodeled and winterized and its use has increased.

The first AFLC camp this summer begins June 20-24 with the Pre-Teen Camp. Area congregations enjoy participating in the annual "Bible Camp Sunday" on June 24, which also marks the beginning of the Teen Camp week. District staff is tentatively scheduled to meet at the camp June 29-30.

Family Camp is July 8-13, followed by a women's retreat July 20-21. Child Evangelism Fellowship is using the facilities from July 22-27.

A new event is scheduled for August 6-10; a boys' basketball camp. A homeschool group is using the facilities September 14-16 and the Young Adult Retreat is November 16-17. Several Canadian groups are also using the campground.

For more information on the events at Galilee Bible Camp, call Curt Thompson at 218-874-7945.

Trip planned

A group of members of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minnesota have put together a northeast United States fall color tour for September 29, 2001 to October 10, 2001. Some seats are still available. If members or friends of the AFLC would like to join them they are encouraged to contact Pastor Walter Johnson, 937 Swift Street, Shakopee, MN 55379; Phone: 952-445-9010 for more information

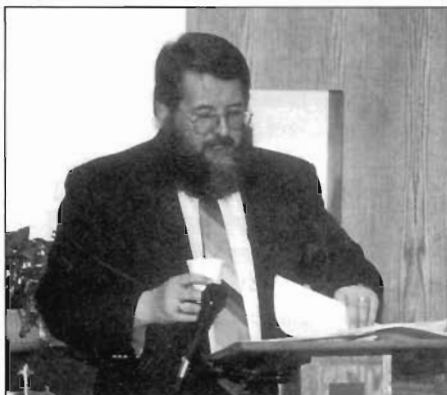
Bloomington, Minnesota — Emmaus Lutheran Church is planning for a yearlong celebration that will occur throughout their Jubilee Year. The 50th Anniversary begins on August 18, 2001 and continues with special events through June 2002.



AFLBS alumni summer reunion and golf scrambler

June 23-25, 2001

The weekend will include a softball tournament, a Barnabas alumni reunion, a Sunday picnic and worship time. For more information contact AFLBS, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441; phone 763-544-9501.



Pastor Jerry Holmaas.

El Cajon, California — Rancho San Diego Lutheran has been providing a lecture series titled: "Here I Stand!" The series began last February with Greg Koukl, a syndicated radio personality who works in the area of Christian apologetics. Pastor Jerry Holmaas (pictured), a professor at the AFLC Schools in Minneapolis, was the speaker during the series in March. An upcoming lecturer is author and speaker, R.C. Sproul, Jr..

This series is designed to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, helping them to acquire the tools necessary to do evangelism in our world and to present the faith of Christianity in a winsome and effective manner.

The Sunday evening lectures have been promoted by using flyers, phone calls to other churches, and providing information at bookstores. Those who have access to radio time have promoted the series as well. The attendance for the lectures has been very good, with a visitor percentage in the forty-percent range.

"This lecture series has been an effective tool in enlarging the ministry of our church," said one member of the congregation. Another said, "We can't do it all in our community, but we can help ourselves and other like-minded Christians to be ready to do what we can." As a result of the series, many are becoming aware of Rancho San Diego Lutheran's presence in the community.

For more information regarding upcoming speakers, see the congregation's web site at www.freelutheran.org.

Pastor Tim Carlson, Wheatland, Iowa, resigned as pastor of Christian Free Lutheran and will complete his ministry there on May 31, 2001. He has served the congregation since 1989. He expects to take a two-month sabbatical and has not taken another call at the present time.

Pastor Clyde Grier began serving Faith Lutheran in El Campo, Texas last February. He has since accepted a part-time call as pastor of the congregation. His address: 2802 Meadow Lane, El Campo, TX 77437; office phone 979-543-1843.

Pastor Phil Hooper, a recent colloquy student at AFLTS, was ordained on April 22, 2001 in his home congregation, St. Ansgar's Lutheran in Salinas, California. AFLC President Robert Lee and Pastor Orville Heipler of Oceanside, California, participated in the service. Pastor Hooper was installed as assistant pastor of Community Lutheran of Oceanside on May 13. Pastor Heipler is the senior pastor of the congregation.

Seminarian Terry Wall accepted the call to be minister of evangelism at Community Lutheran in Oceanside, California. He will be installed on June 10 at Community Lutheran, his home congregation. He has been a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary for the past school year.



Free Lutheran youth convention

Estes Park, Colorado

July 16-21, 2001

Register at 763-545-5631

Seminarian Steven P. Carlson, Dalton, Minnesota has accepted the call to be the senior pastor at the Dalton parish, which includes Kvam, Tordenskjold, and Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran Churches. He currently is finishing his year of internship at those congregations and will graduate from AFLTS on May 26, 2001.

Pastor David Skordahl, Fergus Falls, Minnesota resigned as senior pastor of the Dalton, Minnesota parish and will begin serving the parish as a part-time pastor beginning on June 1, 2001. He has served that parish as their full-time pastor for the past nine years. The three congregations are working towards having two full-time pastors in the future.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (4 months) – January 1 - April 30, 2001

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$267,241.00	\$16,657.60	\$90,393.44	34
Seminary	126,462.00	12,924.67	50,641.82	40
Bible School	162,545.00	11,128.64	58,047.87	36
Home Missions.	242,838.00	17,834.42	86,731.64	36
World Missions.	206,762.00	17,196.19	74,570.03	36
Capital Investment	9,490.00	622.20	2,389.30	25
Parish Education	78,302.00	6,353.50	24,027.54	31
Church Extension	26,119.00	3,324.26	10,859.80	42
TOTALS	\$1,119,759.00	\$86,041.48	\$397,661.44	36
TOTALS 2000	\$1,147,510.00	\$76,480.02	\$346,962.84	30
Goal 33%				

The Evangelism Department received \$4,565.77 in April.

A story is a powerful thing

Some non-Christians were talking about a friend of mine who had come to faith in Christ and started a new life in the Lord. They didn't agree with some of the beliefs he now had and they didn't share his faith, but they had to take note of his story. "Something has happened to him." His story and a life that backed it up packed a powerful punch.

The story of a life in which God has worked is a powerful thing.

The Apostle Paul, when speaking to the crowd in Acts 22 and when on trial before King Agrippa in Acts 26, could have argued philosophy and reason. A strong legal defense could have been presented. But what God inspired Paul to do was to tell His story. He jumped at the opportunity to let people know what he had previously been like, how God had met him and how Jesus changed his life.

"Unbelievers often view evangelists as arm-twisting, high-pressure nuisances," according to Dr. Stephen A. Hayner, president, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. They have great interest, however, in people's stories: how they have changed, how they have endured, what matters to them and what makes them tick. Leith Anderson, pastor and author, says, "Tell your story and you'll reach someone for God." In his book, *The Power of Story*, Dr. Leighton Ford writes: "Evangelism isn't about formulas and programs. It's about what God has done in our lives. Evangelism is the result of God's story intersecting with our story. He is the evangelist — not us."

If Jesus has made Himself known to us and we have a relationship with Him, we have a story to tell. As we tell the story, though, we must make clear to emphasize what the Lord has done. Bragging about what we have accomplished and how spiritual we are is not how to impact lives. As we tell our stories we should strive to insure that the one who receives the most honor and praise is Jesus.

Stories have power but they also have limitations. They are tools for illustrating truth, not determining truth. For example a person may become ill upon eating a certain type of food. That story should not be held up as supposed proof that everyone should always avoid that type of food. It may simply be an illustration of what can happen when one eats food to which they are allergic. In a similar way, one person

may become agitated when listening to a certain type of music and calmed when listening to another type. This is not proof that one type of music is superior to another. Testimonies of opposite reactions exist. These stories are more illustrations of the potential impact of music.

Using stories to prove truth rather than illustrate has danger. Some tell stories in which they claim to have received direction from the Islamic book the *Koran*. Others tell of times when they received peace while involved in some type of New Age ceremony. Their stories of their experiences might be moving and have some similarity to the testimony we give of what Christ has done. Our belief systems would appear to be equal if all we had to rely on were our

stories. But we give thanks that we do not only have the stories of our experiences. We have the true story of what God has done as recorded in the Bible, and it is the Bible that we rely on to determine truth.

Our stories have power and should be told, but let us remember they are not all the same. I give thanks that my relationship with the Lord began when I was baptized as an infant. God has been faithful and kept me in a relationship with Him. While in Sunday school, at Bible camps and other special events, God, through His Word, convicted me of my sin and gave me assurance that I was His child through what Jesus did on the cross.

Just because that's my story, I can't expect it to be the same for everyone. He first brought me to Himself when I was quite young, but that doesn't mean only people under the age of 18 can be saved. The Lord worked in my heart at a Bible camp, but that doesn't mean He only works at Bible camps.

We "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NIV). God loves each of us. "For God so loved the world ..." (John 3:16). We can all be children of God through faith in Christ. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, NIV). While we have individual stories, we have much in common — a common need of forgiveness and a common opportunity to be saved through Jesus. Let us who know Jesus share our stories and share God's truth, so that others will have in common with us the story of what God has done.

—Pastor Craig Johnson

"If Jesus has made Himself known to us and we have a relationship with Him, we have a story to tell."

BUILDING THE BASE

How close will Jesus come to us this Sunday?

Many of us will be celebrating Holy Communion at the Lord's Table this Sunday or a Sunday in the near future. Part of the great debate that has raged in the church following the Reformation, as well as the pre-Reformation church, was over how Christ was present in the Communion meal. Many of us take it for granted that what happens at Communion happens. We don't think more deeply about it than that. We leave the details and particulars to the theologians about how we are to believe that Christ comes to us in this meal. Let's stop for just a moment and consider it.

Just how close will Christ come to us this Sunday? The Scriptures are very clear that Jesus is presently glorified and sitting at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:10, Hebrews 1:3, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22). One might quickly conclude that there is no possibility then, short of His triumphant return, that He is going to get very close at all this Sunday morning for our time at the Communion table. Furthermore, some might conclude that Lutherans are truly out on a limb when they speak of His "real presence" expecting Jesus to show up in so many localities all at one time. How do we continue to say we believe in the real presence of Christ in Communion given these difficulties? Jesus may be fully God

and therefore present everywhere, but in His humanity He must also be fully human too. This would seem to preclude Him from an everywhere-at-once attendance. The Scriptures say Jesus is residing in both His deity and His humanity at the right hand of His Father. But then how can He be present with us this Sunday?

I believe the answer to this perplexing and vexing question is found partly by asking another question: Where is God's right hand? Many would quickly answer by saying, "In heaven, of course!" But inherent in that answer is an attempt to limit both heaven and God's presence to one physical place. This would be theologically incorrect at best and it is basically heretical.

We must not forget two of the most excellent doctrines regarding our God, namely, God's transcendence and His immanence. God is transcendent, meaning He is above all the things He has created and at the same time separate from His creation. To say otherwise would make us Pantheists believing God is in the rocks and the trees, the rain and the breeze. God is also immanent. That means He is present with His creation, close, very near, at hand. His immanence extends to every part of His creation, and it does so at all times. Because of this we say that God is omnipresent.

Now when we look at the idea of Jesus being at the right hand of the

Father, it doesn't seem so far-fetched that He could also be present with us each Sunday, as He has promised, in the bread and the wine.

Jesus told us, "This is my body," and further, "This is my blood." He had full command of the language of the day and could have easily said, "This will just represent my body and blood in my absence." He did not choose those words, though. Instead we have the promise of His real presence with us at the Communion table. We will find Him in His words. We will find Him in and with the meal.

But more important than all of this is that He will find us there. He is present as His Word is read and present at His table. "Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, always give us this bread.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst'" (John 6:32-35).

How close will Jesus come to us this Sunday? Come and see! Come and hear! Come and taste!

— *Pastor John Kent*
Rancho San Diego Lutheran
El Cajon, California