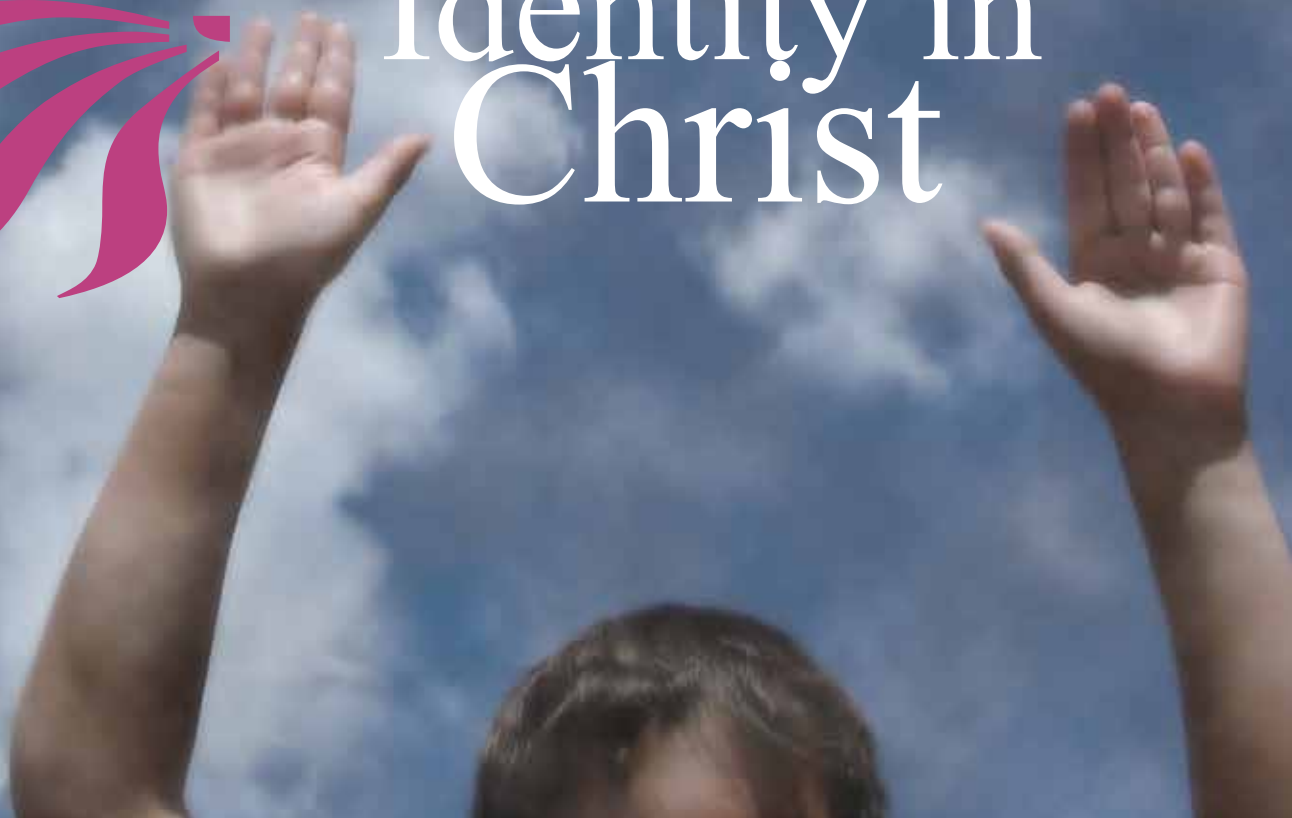


THE LUTHERAN  NOVEMBER 2005
AMBASSADOR

Grace



Identity in
Christ



The last stop on our journey through Eastern Europe took us to Saldus, Latvia. There our team served alongside EEMN long-term missionaries, Pastor Martins and Gunta Irbes. With a twofold purpose, our team worked to reconstruct a building and hold an English Bible camp in the local public school.

From the moment we arrived in Riga to our departure merely 10 days later, we kept busy from early morning to late evening.

As I think of the fun, challenges and joys of serving God in another culture, I am grateful for the opportunities that short-term missions provide. This time, however, something even more pertinent topped my “thank-you” list to the Lord. I gained a fresh perspective of what daily life is like for long-term missionaries, from struggles and challenges to joys and praises.

One of the most important reasons for short-term missions is to serve long-term ministries. As we worked with the Irbes, our team shared a bond with them as we shared in Kingdom work. What a blessing it was to be part of their ministry and to get a first-hand view of life on the mission field.

When we weren’t teaching English and the Bible to students, our time was filled with outreach of different kinds: youth camp, youth meetings, and spending time with host families and the school’s teachers. On top of that, we were thousands of miles from home and there were plenty of cultural insecurities and strange new customs to adapt to. At the end of the week, I heaved a big sigh. It had

been a busy week of ministry.

It was then that I really began to understand what it is like to serve full-time on the mission field. Most missionaries are often understaffed, under-supported and over-stretched as they serve far from home, family and familiarity, taking the gospel to unreached parts of the world. What I had felt after merely one week was just a taste of what life is like for long-term missionaries.

Like many who return home after a short-term trip with a new perspective on life, I returned with a new appreciation for God’s work being done around the world. I pray that God would keep this fresh in my heart and that others would see the value of long-term missionaries. Without our support, their work is limited and the body of Christ misses out on the blessings of obeying the Great Commission.

I challenge you to pray about how God may have you show your appreciation for missionaries. Pray for them daily (Ephesians 6:8). Send them a note of encouragement and thankfulness for what they do (I Thessalonians 5:11). Support them and their ministries through the means that God has provided you (Luke 6:38). And don’t forget about personal visits through short-term mission trips (Matthew 28:19-20). God has appointed you to share in Kingdom work no matter where you live. Don’t miss the opportunity to join in the Great Commission by supporting His work across the globe.

— Monica Coyle

East European Mission Network

“What I had felt after merely one week was just a taste of what life is like for long-term missionaries.”

November 2005
Volume 43, Number 11



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The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 545-5631; fax: 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@afic.org

Subscriptions rates:

\$15 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18 a year, International

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

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

Unsaved



By Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president

THE LORD PROVIDED ME with a special opportunity this past summer to visit with a pioneer AFLC lady who is now in her 90s. She is an encouraging example of the fact that a Christian may keep on growing and glowing in spite of the trials of advancing years. I asked about her family, and the number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren was quite overwhelming. Then she added the words that I can still clearly hear: "Some of them are unsaved."

These are not easy words for a loving parent or grandparent to speak. There is something in us that finds it hard to admit that our loved ones are unsaved, and we tend to make excuses for them. I recall the pastor who

brought a greeting at the funeral of a man who gave no indication in work or deed that he was a Christian; the pastor said, "Deep down there was something there." Yes, this is true, for the Bible teaches that "deep down" in each one of us there is a sinful heart that needs to be cleansed through faith in Christ.

One of our departed pastors often said that a great deception in church life today is the presumption that everyone is some kind of a Christian ... maybe a good one, maybe a poor one, but a Christian nonetheless. This may be based on baptism, but I have found that some don't even need the sacrament to lean upon to make these judgments, and seem to believe that it's not even necessary to be some kind of a Christian. Several years ago one of our pastors was challenged for even implying in a funeral message that only those with faith in Christ go to heaven.

"He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" (I John 5:12). It's as simple as that. There is no doubt that some could apply these words in a legalistic way, passing judgment on those who do not agree with us in every detail. Yet the presumption that everything is all right spiritually with those whose words and deeds proclaim the opposite may be the greater danger.

I remember a lady who confessed that she was in spiritual darkness, and, after hearing God's gracious invitation, prayed to receive Christ. "People will be surprised when you tell them that you were not a Christian," I told her, because she had been much involved in the activities of the congregation. "Why should they be?" she replied. "I never said that I was saved."

Unsaved. It may be hard to admit that the greatest need of a family member or friend is to be saved, but this admission could be a powerful breakthrough. It should move us to greater love, as the Good Shepherd exemplifies when he leaves the 99 sheep and goes after the one that is lost (Luke 15:4). It should be a call to fervent prayer that the lost might be found.



By Pastor Tony Striffler

“Then one of the Elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one who knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they that have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ...’” (Revelation 7: 13-14).

Garden City is a town in southern Kansas that is not too far off the beaten path of America’s Bible belt. In a town of somewhere between 35,000–40,000, opening the phonebook you quickly discover more churches

than doctors and hospitals; many more, actually. You can find the local “Jesus in His Glory store,” — one for English speakers and one for Spanish — right smack in the middle of Main Street. But, if you need a good orthopedic surgeon, well, she’s three hours away!

I visit the Jesus store pretty frequently. I know all the people who work there by name. I help my parishioners find good and sound copies of the Scriptures there. I buy gifts for friends and family for all occasions. I buy myself trinkets for my office. I buy posters for Sunday school lessons. I appreciate them all being there; I really do. I appreciate the specialized commodities of faith. However, I also recognize and abhor cheap grace.

Not too long ago I stopped into the store to pick up a card for a dinner to which I had been invited. I was

*dom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
(1 Corinthians 2: 1-2)*

As a young man and a young monk, Luther, too, despised the sight of the crucifix. In his medieval context he recognized only condemnation and damnation in each and every wound of Christ. It was proof that God was angry! No confession he could ever make, no penance he could ever supply, could satisfy the wrath of God. Roland Bainton writes of Luther's struggle:

"How could anyone love a God who is a consuming fire? The Psalm says, 'Serve the Lord with fear.' Who, then, can love a God angry, judging, and damning? Who can love a Christ sitting on a rainbow, consigning the damned souls to the flames of hell? The mere sight of a crucifix was a stroke of lightning. He would flee, then, from the angry Son to the merciful mother ..."ⁱ

Luther suffered in mind, body, and spirit for many years. He lived in his German monastery from 1505 until sometime between 1516 and 1517 wholly believing that his soul was completely lost and that God was nothing but a malicious and malevolent deity, who enjoyed watching His creation fail and rewarding them with perpetual punishment.ⁱⁱ However, Luther's monastic superior, Johann von Staupitz, knew that the answer to Luther's turmoil was in the Scriptures. He sent Luther on the most important quest of his life.

*Though he will shed my precious blood, of
life me thus bereaving, all this I will suffer*



True Lutheran heritage

out running errands, so I was dressed merely in jeans and a plain t-shirt. The woman behind the counter, the owner in fact, spoke very nicely to me when I first came to the counter to pay for my purchase. However, as if looking upon the face of a demon, she abruptly stopped speaking and gazed at me as if with disdain. Noticing my golden crucifix, which is always about my neck, she inquired/accused: "I thought you were a Lutheran!"

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God in lofty words or wis-

*dom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Life will
from death the vict'ry win; my innocence shall bear
your sin; and you are blest forever!*ⁱⁱⁱ

Staupitz, himself a believer in a vastly different penitential system than most of his contemporaries, wanted Luther to give up the hopeless medieval ascent to God and accept God's descent to him.^{iv} Staupitz understood that Luther was a son of the Church, vehe-

See **Crucifix**, page 15

Kids

By Pastor Peter and Mary Ann Ward

In view of the denominational mosaic within the Christian church, one might ask if keeping our kids Lutheran is something we should even care about.

Is not raising our children to be faithful Christians more important? Speaking out from the Reformation, Martin Luther said, “I ask that men make no reference to my name and call themselves, not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? After all, the doctrine is not mine, nor have I been crucified for anyone.”

Luther reminds us that our identity is in Christ, not Martin Luther. As the Apostle Paul proclaims: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19-20, NASB).



We believe keeping our kids Lutheran merits our concern, as should raising our children to be faithful Christians. We believe this with the understanding that to truly be a Lutheran is to be a Christian. Again Luther wrote, “The center and cornerstone of Scripture is Christ. Therefore the very heart of the Lutheran faith is the conviction that simple trust in Christ as the all sufficient Savior — nothing more, but nothing less — is the only way to salvation.”

While Luther objected to the use of his name, as a distinction among believers it was a different matter when it came to issues of doctrine. “It is true that you should never say, I am Lutherish or popish, for neither of them died for you, neither is your master,” wrote Luther. “Only of Christ may this be said. Therefore you should profess to be a Christian. But if you believe that Luther’s doctrine is evangelical and the pope’s unevan-

tions. A common mistake of parents is to assume that because we believe something, our child should or will also follow this belief. As the maturing child is formulating his or her own beliefs and convictions, he or she also seeks an explanation of what we believe by faith.

Many of us have heard the story of the little girl who watched her mother cut off the very end of a ham before placing it in the roaster and asked her why she did so. Her mother’s reason was because she had seen her mother do so. That did not satisfy the young daughter or now the mother, as it gnawed on her mind as well. She, in turn, phoned her mom, whose own explanation was that she had seen her mother do so. And so the great-grandmother of the inquisitive girl was visited and asked the reason for the cutting off of the end of the ham before placing it in the pan. “Oh,” she replied almost apologetically, “I only did that because the ham

Keeping them Lutheran

gelical, you must not flatly disown Luther; otherwise you also disown his doctrine, which you admittedly recognize as the doctrine of Christ. Whether Luther personally is a scoundrel or a saint means nothing to me. His doctrine, however, is not his but Christ’s own.”

When we speak of keeping our kids Lutheran, our concern is not about a name, but the biblical doctrine of Jesus Christ upon which our Christian convictions are built. Our pursuit of keeping our kids Lutheran can be based upon a three-pillar approach.

You must remain faithful.

First is conviction to our confessions, not just to a name, but to the doctrine of justification in Christ alone — so profusely articulated in our Lutheran confessions — and to why we remain so profoundly dependent on the Word and sacraments.

I (Peter) find my role as a father to have far greater influence in my children’s lives than when I am their pastor. This is true for all children. The primary influencers in developing a child’s convictions are the parents in whose hearts the grace of God in Christ reigns supreme. These beliefs are reinforced in a child when he or she is regularly part of a Spirit-led fellowship where Jesus Christ is preached from the pulpit and the entire teaching of the church is founded upon God’s love in Christ Jesus.

Talk to them about your beliefs.

Second, we keep our children Lutheran by communicating our confessions, and in such a manner that children can articulate what is to become their convic-

was too big for my roaster.”

To keep our kids Lutheran, we must not only tell them what we believe and hold precious, we must tell them why. If they don’t understand, they cannot appreciate our Lutheran confessions. As adults they may go find a different roaster where they think they might, for unrelated reasons, fit better.

Don’t give them mixed messages.

Third, we are effective in keeping our kids Lutheran when we communicate our convictions with consistency — consistency in our message, whether it be in our homes, in our pulpits, in our VBS, in our Bible camps, in our Lutheran schools or in the lyrics of our music. Inconsistency can lead to confusion and a diminishing of our Lutheran distinctives. We are not, however, speaking of a cloistered life. Our aim as parents is not to remove our children from the fellowship of dear brothers and sisters in Christ of other denominations, nor to tear them down. Rather, we should see these as opportunities to further explain our Lutheran distinctions and to open the minds of our children to the Scriptures from which our doctrines come.

Keeping our kids Lutheran is a matter of diligence for both parents and the church alike, bearing witness to them of our conviction to our Lutheran confessions, communicating them in a consistent manner, all the while seeking the Lord’s grace through prayerful dependency upon His gospel Word.

The Wards serve Faith Lutheran, Ottawa, Ill.



It has been said that only a Christian can be truly thankful.

Certainly anyone can feel gratitude and may express that in a variety of ways. However, there is a totally different perspective that is found in the heart of the one who has been illumined by God's Spirit.

When we have the Author and Giver of life, we also have the fountain from which everything else comes.

The Apostle Paul himself is an example of what happens when a believing heart overflows with thanksgiving and praise to God no matter what circumstances one may face. Paul and Silas had just experienced pain and humiliation from a beating with rods before being thrown into prison. Their crime? Simply proclaiming the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus. Later that night, "Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God" (Acts 16:25). They understood, in child-like faith, that their heavenly Father allowed all things for their good. Their response to adversity had powerful consequences. Verse 25 continues, "... and the prisoners were listening to them."

Those two early church leaders teach us the gratitude that comes from knowing God is preparing us for service to Him. Living for Jesus brings our greatest joy. Their attitude didn't change because they had a difficult day. Their hearts were filled with thanksgiving because they did not measure their circumstances in terms of themselves. Paul and Silas



He



accepted the Lord Jesus and His will for their lives.

Someone has said, “An unthankful child of God is a strange anomaly. Praise should be ever welling up in the hearts of those who recognize their constant indebtedness to the divine mercy and compassion.” God’s children should awaken every day with the joy of knowing that heaven is closer as we are being prepared for it.

The Pilgrim fathers and mothers thanked God and took courage even when many of their community lay dead and dying. They came to carve out for themselves a place in the wilderness where they might worship God and introduce Him to succeeding generations. A meal of clams and water brought words of thanksgiving to the Pilgrim’s lips. God had blessed them. Things could have been worse.

A heart and spirit of thankfulness proves the genuineness and depth of one’s faith. Yes, Paul wrote, “In everything give thanks” (I Thessalonians 5:18). It’s God grace at work in the heart of His children. That unlimited grace of God seeks to make us rich at Christ’s expense. This same grace works in the heart of the Christian who spends it to make others spiritually rich.

Thanksgiving is at the heart of evangelism. We can’t just help ourselves, but we want others to have and to know what we experience. God spared not His own Son but freely gave Him up for us all. When we are so grateful to God for what He has done for us, we can-

not rest until others have it, too. Paul and Silas’s jailor saw their hearts of praise and thanksgiving and a short time later cried out: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

The life of Jesus illustrates His concern for the welfare of others. He reached out to help those in need. Many who were healed by Christ immediately used the ability that had been restored to go to others and to speak about God’s work in Christ. These lesser miracles were always meant to work the greater miracle of the heart — a new birth.

The proportion of one’s gratitude to God can be directly measured by how much we allow His will to be done in our lives, including reaching out to others on His behalf.

Clearly the Bible teaches that God often blesses us in spite of our efforts, rather than because of them. He does so for the sake of Jesus because “we are accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:6). Our sense of unworthiness makes us even more thankful. Our spirits are humbled as we are blessed. The Catechism reminds us that God provides all things abundantly “for all the needs of my life ... because of His fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this I should thank, praise, serve and obey Him.”

Our lives can and should be filled with “prayer and hymns of praise to God.” This was true for Paul and Silas. Others were watching. Later, the jailor (verse 34) “brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.”

May we reap the harvest of joy and thanksgiving from a life rich in Christ. He is everything.

Hjermstad is pastor of Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D.

art

By Pastor Wayne Hjermstad

For evangelism



Grief

It happens mostly when I'm singing. Sitting in church, thinking about Jesus, singing hymns like, "I Surrender All" and "Count Your Blessings," songs my sister Jeannie used to sing, sitting three seats down, her little girls in between us.

With Jeannie's voice ringing in a church sanctuary in Washington, I started listening to the voice of Jesus myself. Now every four-part harmony, each worship song, every "All to Jesus, I surrender" makes me think of one of the most influential Christians I knew.

My sister died of cancer in South Dakota last May at the age of 58. But I still hear her voice. It's stuck in my ear. She and her husband, Pastor Michael Brandt, helped steer me to the Lord, and now when a smooth

woman's voice switches back and forth between alto and tenor, I smile and thank the Lord for sending people like that.

The first time I ever laid eyes on her was when she was in high school. She was 15. I was one week old. Mom pulled her out of school so she could hold me on the way home from the hospital. They laid me on two pillows on her knees for the ride home from Minneapolis to our rambler by the airport. I've been resting in her lap, so to speak, ever since.

Jeannie was the one who talked me into going to the Bible school where, 25 years later, I now serve as dean. She let me live in her home during the summers. Her four daughters became my little sisters and friends. Thanksgiving was always a highlight for our families. And this November, when our families gather together again, I'll thank the Lord for three qualities I loved about her most: the voice, the look and the Jesus inside.

First, the voice: Jeannie sang even when she spoke, with a lilt and a laughter that made her sound Swedish. When she sang, she carried you into the ether with

they often don't need more than just two words. I fetched the baby.

In a larger sense, I suppose, that's how many of us who loved Jeannie will feel this Thanksgiving. "All alone." We miss that voice and we miss that look. But we will not miss the Jesus. He still remains. Humans come and go. Jesus stays.

We baby boomers have been suckled to believe that we are forever young. We take to heart the promise of Psalm 90, that life is "seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty." God *owes* us that much, we think. But Jesus never promises tomorrow.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow," says James 3. "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.'"

I'm just a vapor. So are you. But the Messiah who died on a cross and rose from the dead will reign forever.

When I was a little guy, Jeannie used to kiss me on

But Jesus still. remains

a soprano that soared or a tenor that tunneled, high or low, like a Lutheran Julie Andrews. The hills came alive with her sounds of music, especially when she sang about Jesus. On my wedding day Jeannie sang, "Jesus Never Fails," and left me blind and bawling through three-fourths of the ceremony.

Equally memorable was the look. When she asked you how you were doing, you had to tell the truth. She could see it on your face. One day when I was 11, we saw Jeannie off at the airport. Before she left to board the plane, she gave me that look. There was something about the gaze, the eyebrows, the way she waited, that made the most stoic 11-year-old want to cry. "Why is this happening?" I would think to myself.

The last time I saw it was in May. My wife, Linda and I had stopped to see her on a Friday morning. She invited "the little people," our children, to join us, too, so we invited Seth and Gracie inside. After hugs and some questions, she asked, "Where's the baby?"

"Sleeping in the car," I said.

That was not permitted. "All alone," she said — and then she gave me the look. It was a classic Jeannie. No instructions. Even when they're dying of cancer, big sisters tell little brothers what to do. Just, "all alone" —

the cheek with her ruby red lipstick whenever she left for college. My chubby little hand could not resist the urge to dry my face. Each time her eyes wilted. "Don't wipe it off," she sang, with that voice and with that look. I felt strangely sorry for such an insult. You don't wipe kisses off when they come from a lady like that.

I'll be missing those good-bye kisses this Thanksgiving. I'll be thinking about how rapidly life changes. I'll be thanking the Lord for that tenth grade girl who held me on pillows on the way home from the hospital. I'll remember that voice, think about that look, and reflect on that faith. But more than that, I'll remember the Jesus. I'll serve him to the end — until I attend the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, with Jeannie.

I hope, when I'm there, that I can hear the Julie Andrews of the Free Lutherans sing once again — songs to Jesus, maybe "I Surrender All."

If she kisses me then, I'll try not to wipe it off.

Johnson is dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn.



Self

Being a Christian,
being Lutheran,

After being asked to contribute
an article themed on Thanksgiving
and being a Lutheran, I became engrossed
in the coverage of Hurricane Katrina.

Quickly, my thoughts turned away from the article to concern for those in the devastated areas. It did not take long for me to return to the topic of thankfulness, but not in the manner originally proposed. Instead, I began thinking about how thankful I am that I have never had to experience such a catastrophe in my life. I am thankful that I know where my family is, and that I know that they are alive and well. I am thankful that I have a sturdy roof over my head, and a warm bed to sleep in. I am thankful that I have plenty of food to eat and water to drink. I am thankful that I know that I have a job to return to.

Naturally, such thoughts tend to outweigh any thoughts about being a Lutheran. However, as I continued to watch the ongoing drama on television, these events also inspired me.

That many people could still be thankful and graceful in times of tragedy and despair is truly remarkable. Such a response is not necessarily unusual, but it is not always expected, either. Too often as sinful people, we tend to focus on what we do not have instead of what we do have. As Christians, our attitude should be just the opposite. As Lutherans, frankly, we have no excuse for such a “me first” attitude.

We are fortunate that we have a long tradition of this concept of grace. Such a tradition did not start with Martin Luther, nor did he rediscover it. But it was highlighted, articulated, and defended by him. Through rigorous study of Scripture and prayer, Luther came to recognize what the term “gospel” truly meant — a revelation of God’s grace — that through faith in Christ, we could receive the free gift of eternal life.

But how do we accept that free gift? Do we merit God’s grace through rigorous obedience to rules, ordinances, and traditions? Do we shun good works and live

however we choose, as some accuse Lutherans of doing? Of course, the answer to both of these questions is no.

The essence of sin is self. So to accept grace — the free gift of God, we must realize that “self” is the wrong area of focus. Rather, the focus should be on the graciousness of Christ. He lived a sinless life and freely offered up that life so that we could be made right with God and receive eternal life. How does that apply to us? We can apply this graciousness to our daily lives by freely giving to others instead of focusing on ourselves.

In a sinless world, we live only to God and one another. Adam and Eve lost that sinless world because they chose self and not God. Cain chose self over Abel when he killed him. From that brutal act, we learned that we are, in fact, our brother’s keeper. As such, we are called to serve. Unlike the disciples, who were originally preoccupied with determining who was the greatest among them, we are to follow Christ’s example and live to serve. For he who serves without consideration of his greatness is truly the greatest.

Regardless of our status in this world, as Christians — and as Lutherans — we have much to be thankful for. We can be thankful that we have received God’s grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and that we have a tradition that has inspired stalwartly preaching and defense of that grace. We can also be thankful that because of that grace, we are able to concentrate on serving others and not ourselves.

Disasters like Hurricane Katrina may provide us with good examples of offers and acceptance of grace, but such examples should not be limited to disasters. At worship services, Lutherans often pray the Lord’s Prayer. One line in that prayer is, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Since there is no sin, and thus no selfishness in heaven, we should strive to do the same on earth. If we can do that, we will have even more to be thankful for.

Dumler is president of the congregational council at St. James Lutheran, Garden City, Kan.

By Troy Dumler

is about giving grace

25

By Beverly Enderlein

Heileschichte is a unique German noun that means “holy history.” It is the ideal word to apply when charting a person’s life line, and certainly appropriate when reviewing God’s gracious work in the life of a ministry.

Indeed it was God Himself who raised up Heritage Christian Academy (HCA) and has sustained and blessed it for 25 years. The academy’s story is one of God’s great mercy and faithfulness.

This holy history, which has shaped the lives of hundreds of children and teens, began with prayer. The fruit of those prayers is the faithful emphasis upon teaching the academic disciplines from a biblical perspective in obedience to Jesus’ command in Mark 12:30: “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

From a humble beginning in 1981 with 13 students in first through sixth grade, the school has grown to 540 students in kindergarten through senior high. God has blessed this school by enlarging its outreach. Currently, our students represent almost 100 church homes in the Minneapolis suburbs.

HCA began as Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy in 1981. In 1997 and 1998, God supplied the faith, courage and dedicated parents and professionals to begin the senior high school. Our first graduating class was in



Anniversary

2001. It is wonderful to see the continued loyalty and thankfulness that these alumni demonstrate.

Throughout these 25 years, God has provided approximately 185 dedicated Christians who have served as board members, administrators, teachers and support staff. Each one has contributed in a meaningful way to train young people and to strengthen this school. The current regular staff numbers 75. We are united in fostering a school culture of joyful Christianity in an atmosphere of excellence and encouragement.

On Sept. 10, we hosted an exciting celebration day, including the dedication of our second phase of construction at our new campus in Maple Grove, Minn., a new 14-room educational addition and athletic fields.

It was a joy to testify to God’s faithfulness as we reviewed this history for a large crowd of parents, students and guests. The prayerful preparation of concerned parents and the blessing of Medicine Lake Lutheran (now Grace Free Lutheran) set the stage for success. Barbara Moland was the first classroom teacher, assisted by volunteers from AFLTS and AFLBS. The setting was a first-floor AFLBS classroom/dorm room. In later years, the academy would rent other school and church facilities for our growing student body, always hoping and

praying for our own building.

A huge outpouring of sacrificial love gifts from academy friends and families made it possible to construct the first phase in 2001 in Maple Grove. We never cease to praise God for these beautiful classrooms, labs, music rooms, library and gymnasium.

The school has earned a reputation of excellence in the surrounding community. Student athletes, musicians and artists compete in the Minnesota State High School League. Building future Christian leaders is accomplished by the mentoring of Christian teachers, Bible courses, Scripture memorization, mission trips, student government and chapel leadership.

I was the first administrator and was later named president by the board of trustees. I have continued in

this position for 25 years. As HCA begins its 25th year of Christian education, the board has called Rodney Nelson to serve as the new president. I am stepping into the position of president emeritus.

The mission of HCA states, "In providing our students with a quality Christian education, it is our hope that when they are tested by the world, they not only are unshaken in their faith, but they also present a clear and uncompromising witness of the saving work of Jesus Christ." This is our prayer for each student as we count upon God's faithfulness in years to come.

After 25 years as president of HCA, Enderlein now serves as president emeritus.

Crucifix, from page 5

mently believing that which tradition and church scholastics had imparted to him. Therefore, Staupitz sent Luther to the Scriptures. In 1511 he informed Luther that he would be studying for the Doctor of Theology degree in New Testament. This is where Luther would finally find comfort in a God *who came down to save him*.

Luther's tower experience — his moment of conversion to the true gospel of Jesus Christ — occurred sometime between 1515 and 1517. From that point onward Luther looked gleefully upon the crucifix, which became the very foundation of his personal (and our Reformation) theology. A miraculously resurrected judge in the heavens, in gleaming raiment and crowned in glory, does not tell of the inestimable love of God as is revealed in a broken and bloody Christ on the cross.^v

To those who look upon a crucifix and see something other than the grace of God and its intense closeness, Luther gently explains:

"The eyes are offended at a death so shameful, so accursed of God. But for us it is a blessed death, taking the curse from us and bringing God's blessing upon us. ... For there hangs the Son of God, in order to testify that He rejects no one but wants gladly to accept everyone and, as He says in John 12:32, draw all unto Himself. His head is lifted to heaven and shows us the way to everlasting life. His feet are hanging below and toward the earth, for He is treading upon the head of the old serpent, the devil, who crawls about on the earth; He takes away all of the devil's power. For because He, the dear Lord Christ, is hanging there and is paying and rendering satisfaction for our sin with His death, being made a curse for us, the devil, who, because of sin, has obtained power over us, loses his might."^{vi}

Upon finishing my transaction at the bookstore, I clutched my crucifix to my breast, so very close to my heart. I then answered the Jesus Bookstore lady's Theology of Glory with the Gospel's Theology of the Cross.

"Yes! Yes, I am a Lutheran!" I said. "Thanks be to God!" *Here the true Paschal lamb we see, whom God so freely gave us; He died on the accursed tree — so strong his love to save us. See, his blood now marks our door; faith points to it; death passes o'er, and Satan cannot harm us. Hallelujah!*^{vii}

Striffler is pastor of St. James Evangelical Lutheran, Garden City, Kan. He also serves as an affiliate chaplain at St. Catherine Hospital and a chaplain for Tyson Fresh Meats, both in Finney County, Kan.

Notes

ⁱ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), pg. 58.

ⁱⁱ "It is not against all natural reason that God out of his mere whim deserts men, hardens them, damns them, as if he delighted in sins and in such torments of the wretched for eternity..." *ibid*, pg. 59.

ⁱⁱⁱ Martin Luther, "Dear Christians One and All", *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), number 299.

^{iv} E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp 170ff.

^v "I believe that Jesus Christ ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death ..." Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), pg. 22.

^{vi} From a sermon Luther prepared on Matthew 27: 33-56, Edwald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 197-8.

^{vii} Martin Luther, "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Band", *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), number 134.

rules of *order*

Have you ever wondered what the World Mission Committee does when it gets together? Perhaps it is not the most pressing issue on your mind, but as the current secretary of the committee, I thought it might be helpful to give you a glimpse into how we operate.



First a little background. The committee is comprised of four lay people and three pastors. The director of World Missions, Pastor Del Palmer, also attends the meetings. We have face-to-face meetings at least four times per year; phone conferences as necessary (about once or twice a year); and every week there are a new set of email messages to read.

At each meeting a member begins with devotions and prayer. It is important to note that this is more than just a standing agenda item. Devoting time to the Lord and praying that His will be done is the foundation upon which our deliberation rests. It is not uncommon for prayer to be interspersed at various times throughout the course of the meeting.

The bulk of the meeting, as you might expect, is focused on the existing fields. The director begins by briefing us on various aspects of each field, including things like possible areas of concern, follow-up items

from past meetings and correspondence that he has had with the field. Whenever possible, missionaries who are in the United States on furlough come and update us on their work; this personal contact is especially informative and encouraging to me.

Below are some additional items that we have to address at specific times of the year:

First Quarter

- Work on the budget for the next year. The outcome of this work goes to the Budget Analysis Committee.
- Approve the salary schedule (personal support) for the missionaries. This needs to be approved each year.

Second Quarter

(at the Annual Conference)

- Election of officers

Third Quarter

- Approval of special projects for the following year. These projects are non-budgeted projects that have been requested from the fields. They usually have a short duration (one year or less). The list of special projects is available from the World Missions office.

Fourth Quarter

- Motion to accept a budget for the upcoming year. This involves taking the amount that the Annual Conference has approved for the next calendar year and making sure we live within it.

We praise God that our meetings of late have also included people who are expressing an interest in mission work. There is, in fact, a structured, orderly procedure that has been written into our policy manual that deals with the qualifications and appointment of potential AFLC missionaries. Having a procedure in place like this takes a lot of the guesswork out of the process and allows the committee members time to get to know the candidates and seek the Lord's will together with them.

Hopefully this brief introduction to the functioning of the World Mission Committee gives you an idea of what we as members do when we get together. I also hope that you have questions or suggestions for us; we would welcome your input. Email WorldMis@aflc.org with any comments.

— Kevin Olson
Secretary, World Missions Committee
Savage, Minn.

student missions

[Youth Ministries]

Summer 2006

Rescue” was the theme of this past summer’s Free Lutheran Youth Convention, and it describes our need of salvation. It also describes the rescue that a person without hope receives when someone comes alongside them. It, lastly, describes our need of being rescued from a self-centered life to a life of service for the Lord.

Next summer, youth ministries will sponsor two student mission trips to Mexico and one to inner city Minneapolis. We will also sponsor a youth workers’ mission trip to Tanzania.

These are opportunities to bring Jesus to people without Christ and, in so doing, offer them the chance to be rescued for eternity. They will also be times to come alongside of people without hope and show them that all things are possible in Christ. However, the greatest change will likely be in the ones who go on the trips, because God will open their hearts and minds to a life of service for the Lord!

Tanzania, Africa

August 2-18

This ministry team will consist of youth workers who will be traveling to a number of small villages to share the gospel through the “Jesus” and “Passion of Christ” movies. It will be a stretching and growing time for youth workers who will learn to live without modern conveniences. It will also be a spiritually refreshing time as the hearts of African Christians overflow with hospitality.

The following three ministries will involve work, relational ministry, and communicating the gospel. The work portion is literally projects that need to be done. The relational side is through games, VBS, and friendships. The gospel is shared through skits, songs, puppets, and tracts.

Mazatlan, Mexico

June 11-17

This ministry team will work with World Mission Prayer League and the Darwin Jackson family serving the people of Mazatlan. One aspect of Darwin’s ministry is showing the “Jesus” film at camps and villages.



Jerez, Mexico

June 16-25

This ministry team will work with Dan and Debbie Giles and Todd and Barb Schierkolk. They have an active ministry with children in the area and have opportunities for ministry in the community.



Inner city, Minneapolis

August 14-20

This ministry team will work through Hope Lutheran in North Minneapolis to serve a meal, help set up a fund-raiser garage sale, help with a neighborhood carnival, and experience a variety of cultures in the city.

These ministry teams have limited openings, so begin to plan now for your summer 2006 mission trip. If you are a youth worker interested in the trip to Tanzania, or if you are a youth member interested in Mexico or inner city Minneapolis, please contact the youth ministries office at (763) 545-5631, or visit our web site at www.aflc.org/youth.

— Pastor Kevin Olson
Youth Ministries director

— By Cheryl Skordahl
WMF National President

We need better communication," is what I heard from many of you when I became president in 2001. Responding to you, we have upgraded the "Helping Hand" newsletter, reinstated the "Heartline" newsletter for pastors' wives, and started a website that is updated the end of each month. Here are some more ways we can stay in communication.

Website

The WMF is found on the AFLC's web site — meaning savings in our general fund. The Webmaster is Executive Secretary Dawn Johnson. The new WMF web site address is: www.aflc.org/women.

Email

President: pres@aflc.org/women
First vice president: 1vp@aflc.org/women
Second vice president: 2vp@aflc.org/women
Third vice president: 3vp@aflc.org/women
Communications secretary: comsec@aflc.org/women
Recording Secretary: recsec@aflc.org/women
Treasurer: treas@aflc.org/women

Executive Secretary: es@aflc.org/women

Women's Outreach

Coordinator: woc@aflc.org/women

WMF e-news

To establish an even better communication link with the women of the AFLC, there will be an e-mail newsletter beginning January 2006. *Everyone* in your church can sign up to receive WMF e-news by filling out the form at right and mailing it to Dawn Johnson.

Fall resource packet

The president of your church's women's group will receive a copy of the WMF Fall Resource Packet in the mail. To save postage, it is mailed with the WMF Bible Study order. Contained in this packet will be the new handbook. The resource pages will be helpful as your women's leaders plan the yearly program for your group.

Personal communicator

Faylin Myhre is the WMF's personal communicator for large groups and district events. We are especially desirous for her to share with newer AFLC churchwomen. For women whose churches have been in the AFLC seven years or fewer, Faylin is willing to share with you about WMF at no cost to your church. This ministry is provided by your sisters in Christ who belong to more established AFLC congregations by gifts they give to the WMF general fund. Please invite Faylin by contacting Dawn Johnson, executive secretary (715-772-4454), who plans Faylin's itinerary. Faylin will share insights about the AFLC's women's organization, give some leadership tips to inspire you, and share from the Word to strengthen your faith.

What's the point of all these communications? Members of the WMF National Board have a genuine heart-felt desire that your women's group grow in the Lord and prosper. We trust that as you read these inspirational and informative articles, you will experience true revitalization in the Lord and be grateful for His abundant blessings, then share His love with others.

To keep these various communications coming, please support the WMF general fund by mailing your gift to Treasurer Lynn Wellumson, 1814 8th Ave. E., Williston, ND 58801.

WMF e-news registration

Name: _____

Email address: _____

District officer _____ Local officer _____ Pastor's wife _____ Other _____

Name of church: _____

Church email address: _____

Please make copies of this form for the women in your church. Mail to Dawn Johnson at 2991 30th Ave., Wilson, WI 54027 or email es@aflc.org/women

Give me *Jesus*

By Pastor Jim Johnson

Longtime music director Rodvold dies of cancer

After a long battle with cancer, retired AFLC schools music director Don Rodvold died Sept. 12 at home in Minneapolis. He was 71. The memorial service was Sept. 16 at the AFLC chapel in Plymouth, Minn., with Pastor Raynard Huglen and AFLBS Dean Jim Johnson officiating.

Surviving are his wife, Miriam (Mim), a longtime elementary school teacher, and two brothers, Bud and Dick.

Rodvold founded the AFLBS Choir in 1967 and taught hundreds of Bible students who sang in his choirs. A one-time tenor who sang under lauded choral director Paul J. Christiansen while at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., Rodvold caught a lifelong love for chorale music. A native of Hanks, N.D., Rodvold graduated from the University of Minnesota.

A teacher at AFLBS from 1967 to 1985, "Mr. Rodvold" made many friends among the students who comprised the first 700 alumni. In one of his last visits to the school, the ailing Rodvold remembered students with fondness.

"The choirs were one thing," he told AFLBS Dean Jim Johnson, a student of Rodvold's during the last years of his tenure, "but having the opportunity to meet so many people, so many wonderfully intimate relationships with these students, that was another."

Doctors removed a tumor in his tongue in recent years, which made speech difficult, but he continued to correspond and connect with AFLBS friends through email. His last visit to AFLBS was in July 2004.

"Pretty wonderful kids," Rodvold said about a year before he died. "I remember my own friends from college and high school. But I never knew anybody like these kids. Never."

During later years at AFLBS, Rodvold's Concert Choirs and Choral Clubs involved 30 to 45 members. He toured with them annually during spring break. From small town trips on the Bluebird bus he called "The Boat," to international tours to Norway in the 1970s, Rodvold planned concerts that included testimonies of salvation interspersed among classics such as "O Day Full of Grace," "Give Me Jesus," and "Lamb of God Most Holy." Rodvold loved Christiansen's arrangements and had a special fondness for

spirituals such as "Rock Of My Soul" and "This Little Light of Mine." During annual Christmas concerts, he invited alumni to join the Concert Choir and the Choral Club in singing "The Hallelujah Chorus" year after year, a tradition that remains a



staple of Bible school concerts.

Two years ago, AFLBS alumni from 1968 to 1985 gathered at the Bible school to rehearse for five hours and presented a 60-minute concert of Rodvold's selected choral favorites — with their ailing teacher present. A church full of friends and family turned out to hear the concert and attend a two-hour reception afterward.

The reunion helped raise funds for a new Yamaha Grand Piano, given in honor of Rodvold. For Rodvold, the reunion was unforgettable. In conversations with Pastor Johnson, he broke down when he discussed the event.

"Don was overwhelmed and told me it was the most incredible day of his life," said alumnus Lois (Presteng) Forde, class of 1970.

Following the reunion, Rodvold returned to direct the Hallelujah Chorus one last time — leading a choir of approximately 200 voices.

"If I were invited to make a wish, it would be to conduct a good choir just once again," he said after the concert. "Well, it happened. My final aspirations were fulfilled ... and I'll savor the event for the rest of my life." Accompanying the choir was the Yamaha Grand Piano that was named in his honor.



Keippela honored for community service

AFLC pastor involved in many area programs

Pastor David Keippela, Stacy, Minn., was presented with the Linwood Hall of Fame award Sept. 10 at the Linwood Family Fun Day, an annual community celebration. Keippela serves Sunnyside Lutheran, Stacy.

Keippela was recognized for his ongoing efforts with the senior citizens of Linwood and surrounding areas, his active support of the local food shelf and elementary school

and years of tutoring scouts in various achievements such as "God and Country Award." In addition, Keippela was honored for his leadership role in the Carlos Edge fire of 2000, when he recruited volunteer relief workers to assist with firefighter support functions, provided spiritual support to fire fighters and families, and spearheaded relief efforts for those families who lost their homes.

Longtime missionary, Carolyn Dyrud dies

Carolyn Joanne Dyrud, 62, died Sept. 24, 2005. Born Aug. 7, 1943, in Minneapolis, she was the daughter of Milton and Myrtle (Steen) Hove, owners of the Hove (Lunds) supermarkets. She married Connely Dyrud Sept. 3, 1966.

She graduated from Minnehaha Academy in 1961 and attended Augsburg College before graduating from Minnesota School of Business. She also studied voice at McPhail. In 1969, she and Connely began serving the AFLC as missionaries to Brazil. They continued to serve on the field in Campo Mourao, Parana, Brazil, until July of 2004, when they returned to the Twin Cities area. After battling cancer for four months, she passed away Sept. 24.

Surviving are her husband of 39 years, Pastor Connely Dyrud, Maple Grove, Minn.; three daughters, Shannon Dyrud, St. Cloud, Minn.; Christina (Matthew) Dyrud-Petschl, Maple Grove; and Victoria (Barmack) Rassi, Lausanne, Switzerland; one son, Chester Dyrud, Maple Grove; two granddaughters, Jordan and Gabriella; and one brother, Samuel Hove, St. Louis Park, Minn.

The service was Sept. 27 at the AFLC seminary chapel, Plymouth, Minn. Burial was in Lakewood Cemetery. Memorials may be sent to the Miriam Infant Home Brazil c/o AFLC World Missions, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd, 55441.



Youth members from Faith Lutheran, Mineral Point, Wis., gather at their school's flag pole on Sept. 21 for See you at the Pole, a nationwide day of student prayer.

Luther and the song of the gospel

Project brings hymns together

A monumental recording project by Concordia Publishing House presents for the first time a complete recording of all hymns, ballads, and chants composed or authored by Martin Luther. Titled, "Martin Luther: Hymns, Ballads, Chants, Truth," the four-CD set (39 tracks) provides numerous vocal and instrumental settings with English texts and historic narrative quoting Luther.

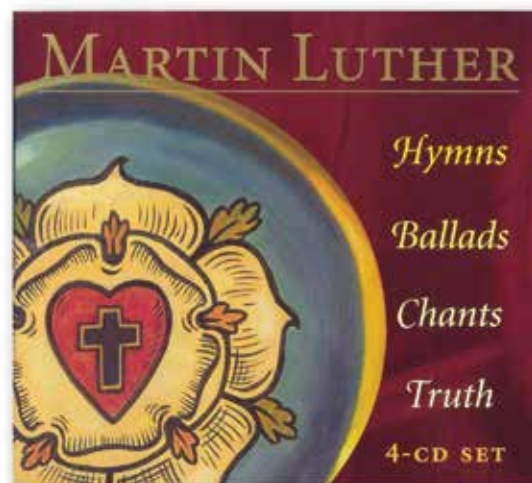
Luther saw music as an outstanding gift from God and placed it next in importance to the Word of God. He believed that all the arts, especially music, should be used in the service of Him who has given and created them. Luther saw the ultimate goal of music as proclamation of the gospel and the praise of God.

As noted by the editors of this project, "The way to proclaim that Gospel is to proclaim Christ and His work. The hymns of Luther are not

about him or his work, nor are they really about us and what we can do. Luther's hymns are about Christ and His saving work on our behalf.

"One of the greatest chapters in the story of the Reformation of the church is the one focused on Martin Luther and his hymns. Luther was a gifted musician with a talent for singing, playing the flute and lute, and composing. ... The time leading up to Luther's first hymn in 1523 was spent in translating the entire New Testament and a good portion of the Old Testament. ... His work in translation and in worship reform became the seedbed for the flourishing of his hymn writing."

The CDs contain hymns for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter and paraphrases of several psalms,



the Nicene Creed, and chief parts of the Catechism, including the Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer. The accompanying 64-page booklet has lyrics and brief comments concerning the history of each music setting.

The set, \$36, is available from AFLC Parish Education, (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org.

Pastor Mel Meyer, Milford, Ill., has announced his resignation as pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church of Schwer, where he has served for the past eight years. His future plans are not finalized.

Pastor Roger Tappert resigned as pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Ind., to begin retirement.

Pastor Wayne Hanson has concluded his ministry at King of Glory, Eden Prairie, Minn., and moved to Fountain Hills, Ariz. **Pastor Steve Brown**, who is enrolled in a one-year colloquy program at AFLTS, currently serves King of Glory congregation.

Pastor Alvin Sather, Pukwana, S.D., has resigned as pastor of the Pukwana-St. Olaf parish, effective Nov. 28, for medical reasons.

Pastor Nathaniel Hoff, who

serves Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., has resigned to accept a call from Trinity (AALC), San Pedro, Calif.

Pastor Earl Korhonen, who serves Hosanna Free Lutheran, Cumberland, Wis., has resigned to accept a call to serve Stavanger Lutheran, Garden City, Iowa.

Pastor David Wold, who serves Christ the King Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., has resigned in order to enter a Ph.D. program. He hopes to teach overseas at a master's degree level while working with Greater Europe Mission.

Pastor Paul and Becky Abel, AFLC missionaries serving in Brazil, have a new address. To send mail to them, write to C.P. 1097, 83-601-990 Campo Largo, PR, Brazil.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of

affiliation from **Peace Lutheran Church**, St. Francis, Kan. The church was formerly affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Members of the Coordinating Committee granted **Mark Ostrem**, Wakonda, S.D., a license for pastoral service. He is serving as a lay pastor at Trondhjem Lutheran Church, Volin, S.D.

Mark Johnson was installed Oct. 9 at the Dalton, Minn., Parish, with AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiating. Johnson is serving as assistant pastor of Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran, Kvam Free Lutheran and Tordenskjold Lutheran.

Steve Lombardo Jr. has accepted a call to serve West Lisbon Evangelical Lutheran, Newark, Ill.

September memorials

AFLBS

Peggy Soward, Jason Rosenberg, Oscar Gylland, Don Rodvold, Kenny Johnson, Mark Neilson, Maxine Berg

AFLTS

Peggy Soward, Kerry Bronson, Pastor Emerson Anderson, Pastor Mike Crowell, Jeanne Brandt, Esther Thaden, Elizabeth Larson, Helen Braunschweig, Melvin Aune

Evangelism

Mark Neilson

Home Missions

Jan Fatland, Jeannie Brandt

Miriam Infant Home

Carolyn Dyrud

Vision

Don Rodvold, LeRoy Flach, Kenny Johnson, Carolyn Dyrud

WMF

Scott Sigdestad, Pastor Mike Crowell

World Missions

Kenneth Johnson, Carolyn Dyrud

... in honor of

AFLTS

Pastor John Dennis (2), Pastor Dale Finstrom

Challenge grant available to schools

The AFLC Schools (AFLBS and AFLTS) are participating in a special one-time challenge grant to receive additional outreach dollars through Thrivent's Giving Plus Program. A minimum of 227 Thrivent Financial members must

participate in giving to one or both of the AFLC schools by Dec. 1 in order to receive a proportion of the total \$800,000 grant dollars from Thrivent. Download an application at www.aflc.org or call 763-544-9501.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (9 months) – January 1 - September 30, 2005

| FUND | TOTAL Subsidy | REC'D IN SEPTEMBER | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | % TOTAL |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| General Fund* | \$387,377 | \$31,788 | \$315,293 | 81 |
| Youth Ministries . . . | 56,062 | 5,875 | 54,623 | 97 |
| Parish Education . . . | 81,988 | 10,607 | 67,442 | 82 |
| Seminary | 156,804 | 17,287 | 151,656 | 97 |
| Bible School | 269,308 | 32,063 | 255,462 | 95 |
| Home Missions. | 277,870 | 25,114 | 187,167 | 67 |
| World Missions. | 262,377 | 17,898 | 160,296 | 61 |
| Personal Support . . . | 368,688 | 29,470 | 274,223 | 74 |
| TOTALS | \$1,860,474 | \$144,987 | \$1,278,995 | 69 |
| TOTALS 2004 | \$1,739,460 | \$153,902 | \$1,349,712 | 78 |

Goal 75%

The Evangelism Department received \$8,046 in September.

* Includes Evangelism totals

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

Statement of Ownership,

Management and Circulation

The Lutheran Ambassador
Publication No. 588-620, Filed 9-28-05
Issued monthly. 12 issues annually.
Annual subscription price \$18
Mailing address of Office of Publication and headquarters of General Business Office: 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.
Publisher: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
Editor: Craig Johnson, 575 34th St., Astoria, OR 97103
Managing Editor: Ruth Gunderson, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441
Owner: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.
Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None.
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes has not changed during preced-

ing 12 months.

Publication Name: The Lutheran Ambassador.

Issue date for circulation data: September 2005

Total number of copies (net press run):
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 4276

Copies September 2005 issue: 4420

Paid and/or requested circulation:

Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3976

Copies September 2005 issue: 4120

Through counter sales:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100

Copies September 2005 issue: 100

Total paid and/or requested circulation:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 4076

Copies September 2005 issue: 4220

Free distribution by mail:

Avg. copies each issue during past year: 50

Copies September 2005 issue: 50

Total distribution:

Avg. copies each issue during past year: 4176

Copies September 2005 issue: 4320

Copies not distributed:

Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100

Copies September 2005 issue: 100

Total:

Avg. copies each issue during past year: 4276

Copies September 2005 issue: 4420

Percent paid and/or requested circulation, average and September 2005 issue: 99%

Publication is required and will be printed in the November 2005 issue of the Lutheran Ambassador.

/s/ Ellis L. Bloomfield, Printer

noticing the poor

[Editorial]

There were people in upper and middle class America who wondered why everybody didn't leave New Orleans and other places in the South when warned of the threat of Hurricane Katrina. Those residents should have just gotten in their SUV, headed up north, got a room in a motel and waited out the storm, thought some.



Craig Johnson

It's true that some residents stayed and suffered the effects of the hurricane because they didn't take the warnings seriously. Others, though, wanted to flee but had no means to get out of town. While some homes in America have more cars in the garage than people living in the house, others, including many in Louisiana and Mississippi, don't have any vehicles that run. They don't have a credit card on which they could charge a motel room. And now they have no means with which to rebuild. They live in a state of poverty many in America are totally unfamiliar with.

More than 37 million Americans live in poverty, which by one definition is individuals under the age of 65 earning less than \$9,800 a year. In a country where childhood obesity is becoming a serious problem, an estimated 13 million American children went hungry at some point last year. There are people who need to rent storage units for their overflow of possessions. Others long for a good, strong plastic bag in which to put all they own.

The hurricane and its aftermath have shed some light on the plight of the poor in this country. We in middle class America can get so busy acquiring possessions and taking care of them that we forget the poor among us. The Bible tells us, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11, NIV). God has a special compassion for the poor and identifies with them. "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Proverbs 14:31). Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, ... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:35, 40).

The Lord, speaking through the prophet Amos, expresses His deep concern and displeasure with how the rich and powerful are treating the poor and needy. "You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. ... For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (Amos 5:11-12).

Recently a court ruled that it is unconstitutional for school children to be expected to say, "under God," in the Pledge of Allegiance. The ruling has greatly disturbed many Christians. I think the ruling is ridiculous and should and will be overturned by the Supreme Court. I wonder, though, what in this country would bother the prophet Amos the most? Would it be that ruling or the fact that some guilty rich people get off and some inno-

Many services are available in this country for the poor. The solution, though, isn't as simple as writing a check.

cent poor people go to prison simply because one can afford to hire a decent attorney and the other can't?

Many services are available in this country for the poor. The solution, though, isn't as simple as writing a check. Some of the poor have never had good role models in their lives. Some don't know how to access services that are available. Some suffer from mental illness or have other disabilities. Some don't know anybody who really cares.

They don't need more programs. They need people. People who will give of themselves and their time. People who will love them, encourage them, guide them, support them and point them to Jesus. People who will take an interest in them and get involved in their lives.

God can bring good out of terrible disasters. It would be good if our eyes were opened to see the ongoing suffering that is around us. It would be good if our hearts were moved to love the poor like Christ loves them. It would be good if we gave our lives to serve the poor, like Jesus gave His life to serve poor people like us.

[Building the Base] part of the family

Thanksgiving is a very special time of year when families gather together for a special dinner of turkey and all the goodies. Warm holiday gatherings with lasting memories are logged into our memory banks. It is a time we look forward to each fall. But those who know differently tell us that the holidays are a very stressful time when you do not have or are alienated from a family to share it with. Belonging is a very important part of our needs.

God, with good reason, values the family. It was His concern from the beginning of time when He said of Adam, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). So God gave him Eve as a helpmeet. We read in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." The family was established as God's institution, the marriage of one man to one woman.

But through Adam sin entered the world, and the sinful condition passed on to all mankind. Sin brought separation between God and man in the Garden of Eden. That separation has been passed on to all mankind. Not only have we inherited a sinful nature, but we are also slaves to sin.

Thankfully, God did not give up on Adam, nor does He with anyone of us. Galatians 4:4-7 brings hope to all who are alienated and separated from God because of

sin. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."

Yes, adoption. What a wonderful way to belong. Our family knows that personally, as one of our six children is adopted. Jon was just more than a year old when he began to belong to our family. There is so much that I could write about adoption and what it has meant to all of us as a family. On Jon's birth certificate, he is named as "Jonathan Gunderson." There is no indication that he is adopted, making him equal to each of our birth children. This is not a Pollyanna story, but a sharing of our lives as a family.

And that is the way it is in the church, which is God's family. His desire is that we not be slaves to sin, but sons and heirs of God. To Him we cry out, "Abba Father!" He calls us by name. And He gives us His family name — Christian.

There is a place for you in the family of God!

“But those who know differently tell us that the holidays are a very stressful time when you do not have or are alienated from a family to share it with. Belonging is a very important part of our needs.”

— Pastor Richard Gunderson
Cambridge, MN