

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 21, 2000

*I will praise thee,
O my Savior,
Till mortal powers shall fail:
Then in nobler strains
I'll praise Thee
When I anchor in the vale.*

- Fanny Crosby, 1878

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always give
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Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson

Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermstad

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

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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

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Look back to your future

"I shall remember the deeds of the Lord: Surely I will remember Your wonders of old" (Psalm 77:11).

It is easy to get caught up with troubles. Many of you readers have dealt with sickness, cancer, financial or family problems, loss of energy and even persecution. You don't have to look very far to find troubles. But the writer of Psalm 77 came across a method which releases you from despair and gives you hope. I like to call that method, "Looking back to your future."

The Psalmist was crying out to God. He said that his soul refused to be comforted (vs. 2). He was disturbed by God (vs. 3). He was so disturbed that he couldn't sleep nor did he want to talk about it (vs. 4). He wished things were like they were before (vs. 6). He began to question God: "Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His loving kindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?" (vs. 7-9). Can you identify with any of this?

I read a story about Knute Rockne, coach of the Notre Dame football team. He was going to face the far superior opponent of USC. Wondering if there was any way he could defeat them, he scoured the city of South Bend, Indiana and found 100 of the biggest men he could find. They were all at least 6' 5" and weighed over 300 pounds. With shoulder pads, helmets and football uniforms, they looked even bigger. At the start of the game, Knute sent each of the 100 men out onto the field one by one. The USC team was intimidated by them and couldn't take their eyes off the giants. They just kept coming. The

USC coach kept telling his team, "They can only field eleven men at a time." But the damage was done. Even though none of the 100 men played in the game, USC was so distracted that Notre Dame won the game.

How sad it is when we allow ourselves to see the enemy or our troubles while losing sight of God. The Psalmist, in all his despair, looked back to his future. "I shall remember the deeds of the Lord ... I will meditate on all Your work and muse on Your deeds ... What god is great like our God? ... You have by Your power redeemed Your people" (vs. 11-15). He remembered all that the Lord had accomplished for the Israelites. God had led them safely through the Red Sea. Because of what God did in the past, the Psalmist knew he had a bright future.

How much more do today's believers in Christ have to look back on? Christians have the rest of the Old Testament, the life of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, the book of Acts, their own testimony, answered prayer, etc. The focus should and must be upon God's faithfulness in Christ.

On October 7, 1916 Georgia Tech recorded the highest scoring football game in history. They scored a record setting 32 touchdowns to defeat Cumberland University 222 to nothing. Cumberland never even got a first down. That victory pales in comparison to the victory that awaits all who trust and focus on Jesus Christ. In Him you overcome the world. Dear reader, look back to your future and you will rise up in hope.

— **Pastor Tim Johnson**
Resurrection Free Lutheran
Beltrami, Minnesota

Christians are joyful in trials because they

1 know that difficulties are able to empower and equip one for ministry in a way that comfort and ease are not.

—Roger Schultz

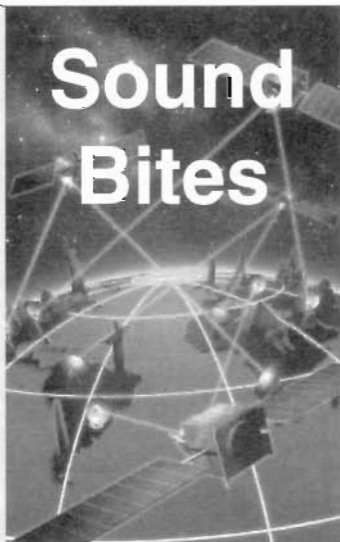
4 If the curious question is asked as to how men who reside on all sides of the globe shall simultaneously see the Son of man at the last day, the answer is that the whole universe and the earth will be completely changed beyond anything that we are able to comprehend with our present notions of time and space.

—R. C. H. Lenski

6 All sorrows, all heartaches, all disappointments and bereavements, lose their bitterness in the sweetness of the Savior's tender promise: "I will come again."

—Herman Gockel

Sound Bites



2 The right disposition to eternity produces the right attitude to life. The expectancy produces responsibility. No one will perform earthly duties with greater zeal and faithfulness than the one who is waiting for the master's return.

—Fredrik Wisløff

What a blessed philosophy of life to receive the good things of life with gratitude at the hands of God, to attend faithfully to one's daily tasks, to be content with daily food and clothing, and to trust God for the future! These are the happiest people on earth.

—C. O. Rosenius

God has sculpted us humans for eternity, and the crumbs of time fail to satisfy our undying souls. Life that isn't centered on God and lived in communion with him consistently disappoints.

Fortunately, the Teacher does not leave us despairing. In God, our hearts find satisfaction and meaning.

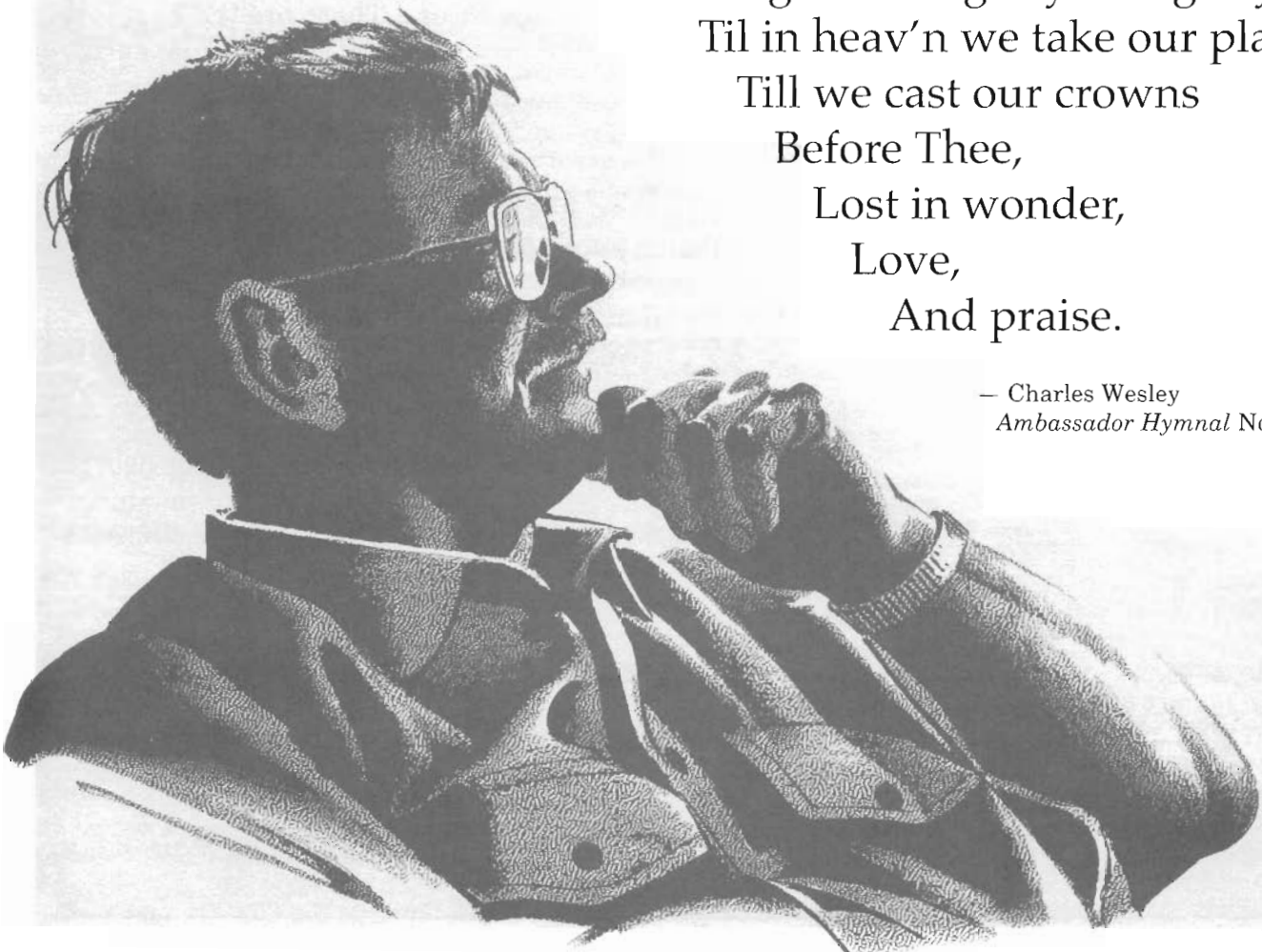
—Bruce Demerest

5

Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown:
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter ever"y trembling heart.

Finish, then, thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee,
Changed from glory into glory,
Til in heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns
Before Thee,
Lost in wonder,
Love,
And praise.

— Charles Wesley
Ambassador Hymnal No. 226



There is a clipping on my refrigerator that says, "Contentment is not getting what you want — It's being satisfied with what you have."

Being thankful for what I have brings contentment. When I am tempted to grumble, feel sorry for myself, or wish for more things, it's time to give thanks. For when doing so, I realize the reason for my grumbling fades away.

Last May my husband, Bob, passed away as a result of early Alzheimer's Disease. When he was diagnosed in early 1998, I searched for and found a reason to give thanks in this situation.

I have always admired people who taught or cared for the physically and mentally handicapped. It was something I didn't think I could do. But suddenly life changed. I asked God to change me and make me a caregiver and He did! How awesome! There is no way I could have had the patience and fortitude without God's help. He had not graced me with those attributes before because the need wasn't there. Oh yes, patience was needed in raising children but the patience I needed now was different. Now I would have to deal with things that would not get better. It was not always easy to think of things to be thankful for, but with practice, it became easier to see God's hand in our lives.

Adopting the "whatever" attitude made it easier to be thankful. First Thessalonians 5:18 was no longer just a nice verse: "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Some of the "whatever" I learned to accept were:

— When he mowed the lawn without starting the motor (I could be thankful he couldn't start it and perhaps hurt himself.)

— When he went to bed with his socks on, wore three shirts at once, or

Always give thanks?

his shoes on the wrong feet

— When he fell asleep at the table while having coffee with the neighbors (Thank God for understanding neighbors.)

— When he gave away a newly purchased batch of cookies (Thanks for loving neighbors who appreciated them.)

There were many more "whatevers" but you see, in the whole scheme of things, they weren't important. I could thank God for Bob's gentle spirit, togetherness, his ready smile, days without blow-ups, things we could laugh about, the growth I saw in empathy and faith in my family, the prayer support of our church family, concern of customers who missed Bob at our store, for the time to just sit with him and watch the ducks on our lake, and the list could continue. This last August, I commemorated our anniversary without him, but I had forty-one years to remember thankfully.

There can be joy in all things — sometimes I just have to look harder. And if I give thanks, joy will follow.

"God, You're so good to me;
You've always been so good to me;
I'll sing it to eternity,
God, You're so good!"



— *Bonnie West*
Stillwater Lutheran
Kalispell, Montana



Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and
supplication with  let your
requests be known to God.

— *Philippians 4:6*

A heart of an angel



— *Sheri Plucker*
New Hope Lutheran
Snohomish, Washington

The phone rang. We were awaiting a call,

and with a deep breath I picked up the receiver. Our doctor's voice was shaking as he shared the results of my recent tests that indicated our baby was going to be born with Down Syndrome. My hand began quivering. Then there was silence. I couldn't talk. I screamed as I dropped the phone. I felt like my life was shattered. Our dreams and expectations were now gone forever, and I wept uncontrollably.

I sat down on the stairs and wondered: "Why God is this happening to us?" Our two sons were horrified by my cries and quickly ran up the stairs to hug me. I'll never forget the comfort they gave. We sat on the stairs clinging to one another as I cried. My dad walked in the door moments later and I ran to him with the news.

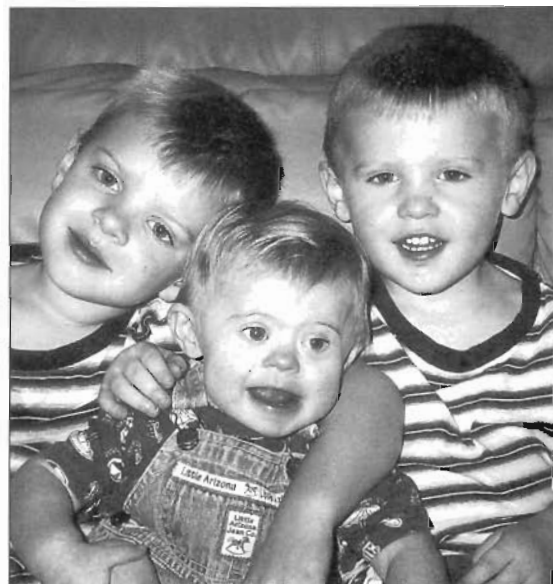
He held me in his arms and, though I

could see the pain in his eyes, he said, "God will take care of you." We knew only God could help heal this pain through time. There wasn't a moment when tears weren't streaming down my cheek long into that night. That was the longest day of my life.

After months of anticipation our daughter Hailey was born on June 13, 1999. There were days it was hard to understand why God gave us Hailey with all of her problems. She had difficulty eating and her first heart surgery was unsuccessful. But as time passed, His plan became clear — to bring us and others closer to Him. Through the obstacles that had to be overcome, God continued to challenge us to accept these difficult times and trust in Him.

One day in particular stands out in my memory. Last March 27, Hailey was scheduled for her second open heart surgery at Children's Hospital in Seattle. We knew her life was at risk. While we waited my husband and I prayed for God's protection over our little Hailey, who at nine months still weighed only 13 pounds. When the anesthesiologist entered the room, we both wept. He took her from my arms and I pleaded, "Please take care of our little girl." He promised they would, turned and left us alone. I felt myself crumble. I had never been so frightened. Then once again the Lord reminded me that Hailey's life was in His hands. My part was to trust and obey Him.

Our church has been very supportive



Hailey and her brothers, Brennen and Peyton.

throughout the months following her birth. The encouragement we received from our pastor and his wife was unbelievable. A twenty-nine hour prayer vigil for Hailey was organized so someone would be praying every fifteen minutes before, during and after surgery. I couldn't believe the eager response from our family and friends. We filled every time slot. Prayer united our congregation in a powerful way as we looked to Jesus to protect Hailey.

I fasted and prayed throughout the day of the surgery. Previously, I had known nothing about fasting and now I prayed that God would direct my path. One morning before her surgery, I came downstairs and my daily devotional included the verse from II Samuel 12:22, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, and let the child live?'" Clearly, God spoke His plan for me. I was challenged to truly trust the Lord and His promises.

The surgery took a very long three hours and thirty-four minutes. When the surgeon walked off the elevator and said, "Hailey's surgery was successful!" we rejoiced. Now there were tears of joy.

I walked into the intensive care unit frightened of what I might see. Every monitor imaginable surrounded her helpless little body and tubes were everywhere. Yet I had never felt so strong as I knelt down beside her and whispered, "I love you, Hailey." Only God could give me that strength. God had shown us that if we listen and trust in Him, He will give us a strength that will surpass all understanding. From that time on, I felt my attitude change. I knew then that Hailey was blessing our lives — she is God's special gift to us.

My father's words were true. We have seen God work in many ways. God has drawn us and many others closer to Him. He has taught us a lot about accepting one another for who we are. We've learned new lessons about love and the power of prayer.

I thank God for Hailey every day. Her smiling face each morning reminds me that she was heaven-sent to us for a reason. Her smile brightens our home and touches the hearts of those who meet her. It's as though she opens hearts to a place we never knew was there, a peaceful place. Truly, I believe, Hailey has a heart of an angel.



Grow rich in giving

Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine
It shall serve thee and thy brother.

Love divine will fill thy storehouse,
Or thy handful still renew.
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two.

Numb and weary on the mountains
Wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow?
Chafe that frozen form beside thee,
And together both shall glow.

Art thou stricken in life's battle?
many wounded round thee moan;
Lavish on their wounds thy balsams
And the balm shall heal thine own.

For the heart grows rich in giving —
All its wealth is living grain,
Seeds which mildew in the garner;
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.

Is thy burden hard and heavy?
Do thy steps drag — wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden;
God will bear both it and thee.

— Margaret Kittelson
Newark, Illinois



Faithful and sensible

What will Jesus find
when He returns?



— *Pastor Jason Holt*
Calvary Free Lutheran,
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

When I was a teenager and given a task by my parents, I did a pretty typical thing. I went to my official “Scale of Effort” chart in my mind to find out exactly how much effort to offer. The interesting thing is the answer always came back the same. You see it didn’t matter if I was asked to mow the lawn or to help work on the car. It didn’t matter if I was asked to move heavy things from one point to another or to help with household cleaning (by far my least favorite task). The task didn’t determine the effort for me. “How much effort did you give?” you may ask. The answer almost always was “just enough.”

Just enough to get these tasks completed. No extra effort. No extra time. Just what it takes. Nothing more ... and I wish I could say nothing less, but I often tried to get by with a little less than enough.

But there was one thing that helped me put out more effort: knowing that Dad or Mom were looking. When my parents were watching, my motivation increased dramatically. The eyes of my parents seemed to jump-start my effort levels like nothing else could.

Looking back now, I was far from faithful and I was less than sensible. If I would have been faithful, I would have given all my effort without regard for the task and without regard for if Mom or Dad were watching. If I would have been sensible, I would have seen that committed work was done faster than halfhearted effort every time.

When we look into spiritual things, we sadly offer the same effort to following Christ, personal godliness, and Christian service as I did with my household chores. I was reminded the other day to, “Live as if His coming is far away; prepare as if His coming is tomorrow.”

These words give us a different challenge. These words point us far from the mediocrity of “just enough.” When it comes to our relationship with Jesus Christ, we are called to be faithful and sensible.

The fact that Jesus is coming again motivates believers to serve Him. This motivation is not out of fear of a hard heavenly judge. Instead, our motivation is rooted in the love, mercy and grace Jesus has shown us at the cross. We give our lives in complete surrender to His will and to His direction in His Word, because of Christ’s heart for us. The Lord promises to lead us by His Spirit to do His work in His Kingdom. We are faithful by giving ourselves daily to Jesus. We are sensible by giving ourselves completely to Him.

If His coming is “far away,” then we can work and serve Jesus as if every single day of devotion to Christ will have an amazing impact. And just in case we forget, every single day lived in devotion to Jesus will do just that! The Kingdom of God will go forward as the gospel is shared until He comes. If His coming is “tomorrow,” then we must be pre-

“It is certain that Jesus is coming again.
... We shall see life on earth from heaven’s
perspective, and we shall see the invisible
hand which held and led us.

Living in the
light of His
Second Coming



pared. Our love relationship with our Savior and Friend must be real and close. There is no other wise position to take except with Jesus. We must not allow anything to take our eyes off Him.

The thought of being faithful and sensible is not a new one. Jesus said in Matthew 24:44-46, *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise (sensible) servant whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns."*

When Jesus returns, what will He find?

He desires to find His own faithfully carrying His gospel of forgiveness of sins and eternal life to the world. He desires to find His own sensibly clinging to the cross and walking in His Spirit. Looking to Jesus daily by faith does not allow for the carelessness, cruelty or carousing of an unfaithful servant (Matthew 24:48-49). By God's grace, sin will have no hold on the one whose heart and mind are stayed on Jesus.

As we remember the fact that Jesus is coming again, may our hearts be moved to action; not out of a slavish fear of Christ, but out of a childlike reverence for our King of kings. May we serve Jesus faithfully by His love. May we serve Him sensibly by His Word. May we serve the Lord until He returns!



For a Christian, everything that day will end in worship and praise. We shall sing praises to Him who was so kind even when we could not understand Him."

— H.E. Wisloff

Will you be taken up with Jesus or *Left Behind*?

A look at the *Left Behind* book series

by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

— Kristie Nelson
*Christ Is Lord Free Lutheran
Onalaska, Wisconsin*

As a young Christian, I attended a Christmas/Advent luncheon for women. That morning, the theme centered around Christ's Second Coming. An intriguing, yet unsettling song was sung by a woman there. It was called "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." The song talked about one person being taken up in the clouds while another was left lying asleep in bed. It went on further to say that there was no time at that point to change your mind about God. The Son had come to take those who had a relationship with Him and were waiting for Him to take them to heaven with Him. The song ends with a lamenting chorus wishing that all would have been ready.

Most call this future event, this part of His Second Coming, the Rapture.

On and off since then, I tried to read about this happening in the book of Revelation and other portions of Scripture. Much of what is written about these events with beasts, seals and churches were hard for me to understand. It helped to read commentaries or listen to a Bible teacher on the subject. But for the most part, some of it was difficult to piece together and remained a mystery to me.

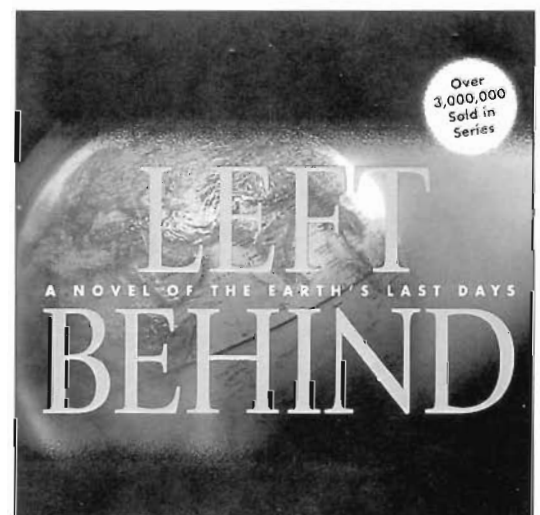
When the *Left Behind* series recently started being published, many people rushed to purchase them. I heard about the exciting novels at a women's meeting one afternoon. At first, I wasn't real anxious to read another end times book that I probably wouldn't understand. Then someone loaned us the first book, *Left Behind*, and I thought I'd give it a try.

I have just finished the seventh book in the series, *The Indwelling*, and I can honestly say that I had a hard time putting each one down. The books are filled with excitement as each chapter ends with some kind of "cliff-hanger." The first book begins with the rapture and describes how throughout the world the Christians have mysteriously disappeared. Those left behind have difficul-

ty with what is going on and mild chaos breaks out. During their grief, many remember and have to evaluate what they'd heard about a time like this. Some finally come to a belief in Christ and others explain the disappearances away. Throughout this time, earthquakes occur and power struggles in the confused countries of the world take place. The biggest power struggle, of course, is in the rising up of the anti-Christ. The first through seventh books in the series march through the first three and a half years of the projected seven years of the Tribulation.

Even though this series is fictional, it attaches some present-day possibilities to the seemingly complex nature of the end times. Because of that, I can use my inadequate "human thinking" to try to understand these awesome godly happenings. It gives me comfort to know that Christ will return for me and that I will not have to live on earth without the Holy Spirit. It gives me a desire to share my faith so that others are not left behind to struggle on their own.

When all is said and done, we still don't know exactly what will happen and when He will come for us. But at least we can know that things will happen and that He will come for us. The Second Advent will happen — Come, Lord Jesus.



Waiting with joy

"It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:12-15).

*— Ellen Fox
Norman Lutheran
Tioga, North Dakota*

I grew up on the prairies of North Dakota and although I moved a few times I have never lived in any other state. Now my husband and I live just across the creek from the house where I was born. God has blessed me in many ways: homes and work places where I have been comfortable and secure, a Christian mother and father, a loving husband and family, a Bible-believing church, many God-fearing pastors, opportunities to study the Bible and enjoy Christian friends. Although I have traveled a little, I have never had any great adventures. I am definitely not a brave or self-reliant person. In my own strength I experience fear and worry about many things. Sitting down to write my thoughts on this page is fearful for me and I feel unworthy. At this point in my life I find the old and familiar much more comfortable than the unknown and new circumstances. How then can I look forward to the future without fear, find peace and joyfully anticipate Christ's return?

The Scriptures make it clear that the days leading up to Christ's return will be a very terrible time. In Matthew 24 we read that there will be many false prophets to lead us astray. There will be wars, famines, earthquakes, brother will turn against brother, and much evil and ungodly behavior will be common. We have only to read the newspapers to know that there is much wickedness in the world today.

There are certainly many reasons to be

afraid in times like these and in the days ahead. I know that Jesus will return but I do not know when. Christ has told us all this so we will be ready and watching. "You also must be ready for the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Luke 12:40). We do not need to nor does God want us to live in fear or without peace and joy. Christians, of all people, should live joyful lives. My fear is replaced with joy because by grace I have been saved by Christ's death on the cross for my sins and I have a personal relationship with Him. No big change, unseen danger, or unknown circumstance can take it away. "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances ... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. ... I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11b, 12b, 13).

My two-year-old grandson is in what I call the "me-do-it" stage. One day when he was in my care I reached for his hand as we were about to cross a street. He pulled his hand away from me, looked up and said, "No, Grandma, me hold my hand." As he folded his hands together, he bravely stepped off the curb.

I can't live my life alone. I must put my hand in the hand of my Savior and walk daily in his grace. Only then can I eagerly watch and wait in anticipation of His glorious appearing.



I want you for the United States Army." The glaring eyes and bony finger of Uncle Sam on the recruiting poster seem to stare a hole into the person who looks at that advertisement. That poster was first used to recruit soldiers in World War I and has regained a popular position in recruiting offices during the past decade.

Like Uncle Sam, God looks at each of us, calls us by name, and says that He wants us to serve Him.

Jesus put it this way, "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21 NIV). Each believer in Jesus Christ is called into the service of God's kingdom and sent on a mission. While every believer in Christ is called to serve the Lord, He sends some to work as pastors, some as missionaries, and others as chaplains. We are all called to pray.

Today, Jesus expects His Church to send laborers into every part of the world. The Apostle Paul asked the question, "And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:15). This verse presents an exciting challenge. The AFLC has received a mandate from the Lord to send pastors, missionaries, and chaplains with the message of salvation.

Twenty-five years ago, the AFLC sent me as its first military chaplain. I was ordained as a pastor and a chaplain to represent our church

I am sending you



— **Pastor Timothy K. Skramstad**
Our Savior's Lutheran
Zumbrota, Minnesota

body in the armed forces. The Lord placed a great burden on my heart for those who were in the Army, but I could not go unless I was sent by our church. All branches of the military have a requirement that candidates for the chaplaincy must represent a recognized religious body. This requirement safeguards the servicemen and women from unscrupulous individuals.

Chaplains have to be sent into the military by our church just as we commission missionaries and send them to foreign fields. Sending a missionary or a chaplain is a great responsibility. Our obligation to the missionary does not end with the commissioning service. As long as the missionary is on the field, we promise to pray for, to encourage and support that individual. When we send out a missionary in this manner, we are also going to the foreign field.

In the same manner, our church sends pastors into the military chaplaincy. Without the support, prayers and encouragement from individual congregations and from the AFLC, we could not have effective military chaplains. I have known many who were allowed to enter the military chaplaincy by their denominations, but who were failing spiritually. These chaplains had no one praying for them and very seldom heard from pastors or congregations with words of encouragement. Life in the military can obviously be physically dangerous, but it can also be spiritually hazardous if no one prays.

The military is one of the most critical mission fields in our world. My heart ached as I prayed over units with more than a thousand young men and women representing every state in our country. Most of these young soldiers serve in the military for only three or four years. I often asked myself: "What would it be like if they returned home with a love for the Lord?"

The mission field in the military also extends to many foreign countries. The military is deployed to many different lands, but there are actually many who enlist in the U.S. military who are citizens of other countries. While I served as a chaplain I had the privilege of sharing the gospel with soldiers from Australia to Nigeria. I wanted these soldiers to return to their native countries carrying a Bible and the message of salvation!

Chaplains are missionaries to lost people. It really makes no difference if they are from France or South Carolina. Without Jesus Christ every soul is eternally lost. The prayer of the church must be that the Lord would raise up more pastors to proclaim the good news in the military and that the Holy Spirit would empower those who serve.

Is God looking at you, pointing His finger, and asking you to pray?

Pray today for:

Chaplain Mark Benz,
United States Army
Walter Reed Army Medical
Center, Washington, DC
Chaplain Mark Antal
North Dakota Army
National Guard
Chaplain Craig Benson
United States Air Force Reserve
Chaplain Richard Long
Civil Air Patrol
Pastor Tim Skramstad
Director of the AFLC
Department of Military
Chaplains



Filled with Thanksgiving

The Amplified Version of Ephesians 3:20 reads, "Now to Him who by His power that is at work within us, is able to do exceeding abundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or think — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes or dreams — to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever. Amen!"

Words cannot describe the praise in my heart as I give glory to God for His goodness to me. He gives not sparingly, but with divine abundance. And He keeps giving and giving and giving again! His abundance overflows and overwhelms my heart into deepest awe and worship. I whisper thanksgivings and rejoice in His faithfulness. How refreshed and filled I am in His holy presence. Oh, the great love of Jesus.

I am full of thanks, Lord, for Your abundance of:

- steadfast love — everlasting and sacrificial;
- great salvation — Your greatest love-gift to me;
- goodness — laid up for those who fear You;
- tender mercies — toward all who call upon You;
- eternal life — sealed as a guarantee upon my heart;



mighty power — at work within me;
pardon and forgiveness — to bruised and weary hearts;
peace — precious beyond human understanding;
comfort — for my every sorrow.

"Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights" (Psalm 36:7, 8). O, my Jesus, I worship and bless You and give heartfelt thanks for your love and faithfulness. I will praise You as long as I live, my Father. Alleluia! You are robed in majesty and strength. I feast in Your presence.

"And now all glory to Him who alone is God, who saves us through Jesus Christ our Lord; yes splendor and majesty, all power and authority

are His from the beginning; His they are and His they ever more shall be. And He is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into His glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy" (Jude 24-25).

Yes, Lord, I too shout with everlasting joy:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts,

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

Thank you, Lord, for Your exceeding abundance!

— Barb Skeie

*Morgan Avenue Lutheran
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

A Thanksgiving to remember

Our special Thanksgiving begins at the cross and what Jesus did for me and each one of us. God loved us so that He gave His only Son to die for us so that, by believing and trusting in Him, we can have eternal life.

Children of God of many colors and nations have stayed at our home throughout the years. I'll never forget one Thanksgiving when our home was filled with guests from Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

The young man from Hong Kong cut up the large turkey in a few minutes flat and it was boneless on a large platter. Our Vietnam guest giggled as she knew I cut larger slices. It was a small thing but it caused me to pause and reflect how easy it was to gloss over the little sparks of joy that pass our way throughout the day. That day each of us in our own ways brought a spark of happiness to each other through thanksgiving to God for the food, games, fellowship and caring about each other.

— Maxine R. Erickson
Wadena, Minnesota



Greenbush, Minnesota — Each winter the United Free Lutheran WMF quilt for missions at home and abroad. Last spring they decided to start another tradition and presented eight of their graduating seniors with quilts to take with them to college or as they start careers.

New student center planned for campus

The AFLC Schools Corporation met on October 21 for a special meeting to consider the plans for the Vision 2004 project. A large part of Vision 2004 involves construction projects on the campus of the AFLC's Bible school and seminary. At the corporation's annual meeting held in June during the AFLC Annual Conference, the schools' board of trustees was asked to provide clarification regarding details of the project and redefine the size and scope of the building plans.

The new plans that have been approved by the board of trustees were submitted to the corporation and received their approval. Members of the corporation also expressed their beliefs that the most pressing need on campus and the first building that should be considered for con-

struction is a student center. Included in such a building will be classrooms, a music area, a library and a cafeteria as well as some faculty offices. Such a building is needed because of current classroom space being used virtually beyond capacity and inadequate library space.

The corporation was informed of the costs of remodeling the current buildings. One example is the present cafeteria. It is becoming too small to meet the needs of the growing number of students at the Bible school. To remodel the cafeteria would require bringing it up to present-day codes. The corporation agreed with the board of trustees' belief that because of the high expense of such a remodel, building new would be a wiser use of funds.

It was also determined at the cor-

poration meeting that 80 percent of the projected funds needed for the building of the student center must be received before construction begins.

Vision 2004 Project Director, Pastor Tonnes Pollestad would be glad to visit with anyone who has questions regarding the project. He seeks much prayer as he states, "There is no greater impact on the project than our prayers of dependence upon God for His will and way." To ask questions or to schedule a visit to a congregation about the project contact Pastor Pollestad at Association Free Lutheran Schools, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone: 763-412-2004; e-mail: vis2004@aflc.org.

— **Pastor Craig Johnson**

AMSTERDAM 2000 — Proclaiming the message of reconciliation to the world

July 31

The Bible and its power in evangelism was the theme for this day. Dr. John Stott, Anne Graham Lotz and George Carey were the speakers who had to share with an audience, many of whom were struggling to get adjusted to the new time zone.

Dr. Stott said, "Without the Bible, evangelists would have nothing to say, nothing worth listening to, and no hope of success." His closing statement was, "We should read the Bible on our knees."

I attended a workshop led by Dr. Bill Newman. He said the delivery of an evangelistic message should include repetition of important concepts when preaching to the lost. "The fact is, 62% of all ideals are accepted only after them hearing the idea presented six times."

August 1

Finally I enjoyed a good night's rest. Refreshed, I could focus on all the information and God blessed me richly. Many shared the same experience. This day's focus was on Christ the Savior. The featured

speakers were Ajith Fernando, Gerry Gallimore and Dela Adadevoh. Robert Cunville from India spoke on presenting the gospel to different audiences. He said we need to know our audiences well before we speak to them. He shared this acrostic of audiences:

Adapting is needed
Understanding is demanded
Depending on the Holy Spirit is a must
Indepth study of your listeners is required
Excellent preparation is imperative
Necessity of prayer is essential
Changes are inevitable
Essence of the gospel is never changed
Suitable application is the key to the harvest.

August 2

I took advantage of the free morning and afternoon by walking about five miles around the old and beautiful city of Amsterdam. I noticed many cornerstones read 1641. It is a city known for being tolerant. The Billy Graham Associa-

tion chose the city because anyone can get a visa to go there. Many of the participants would not have been allowed to come to the U. S. or many other countries.

The day ended with an awesome session. Steve Saint, the son of the slain missionary Nate Saint, shared his testimony with the murderer of his father standing next to him. Mincaye was one of the Auca Indians of Ecuador who killed five missionaries in 1956. Steve's own children now call Mincaye, "Grandpa!" Tears came to my eyes as I listened to this story of complete forgiveness, and how God has used this tragedy to glorify His Name. Many Auca Indians are now walking in "God's path," as Mincaye said.

The evening concluded with a challenging message by Chuck Colson, the former White House aide to President Nixon who served time in prison for his involvement in Watergate. God has used this broken man to reach into many prisons throughout the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

— **Pastor Jim Rasmussen**
AFLC Director of Evangelism

MTI students gain skills for mission work



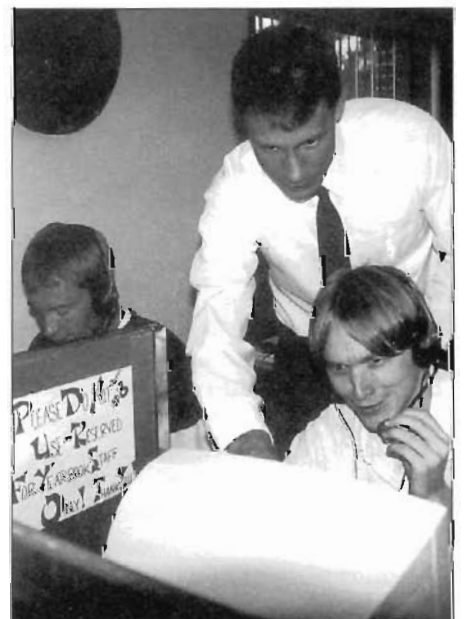
The Ministry Training Institute group paused for a picture before leaving the AFLBS campus for a training experience in the northern Minnesota Boundary Waters. Bible school registrar Ellen Erdman, pictured far left, also traveled with the students. In reflecting on the experience, Pastor Schierkolk said, "The students grew closer and learned to work together as a team. We were thankful to our guides who made this a great and challenging trip." All four students plan to go to Brazil the beginning of 2001 for their four-month internships. Please pray for them as they study this fall and visit congregations and share their vision. Each of the students must raise \$3,500 from supporting congregations and individuals by January 1, for their internship in Brazil.



Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, North Dakota, taught a class on map reading skills. He and Pastor Mundfrom, both veteran Boundary Waters guides, gave several outdoor skill classes before sending the students on an expedition around the islands of Cherokee Lake to put into practice what they had learned.



Alex Yambrick gets a hand from Pastor Steve Mundfrom, Arlington, South Dakota, as he prepares to portage a canoe. The September survival training trip to the northern Minnesota Boundary Waters was a time for the students to grow in their confidence in overcoming challenges and their trust in God to get them through. The second day of the trip was spent paddling and portaging canoes for about seven hours, at times slogging through ankle-deep mud while carrying heavy packs.



The MTI students study Portuguese with the aid of computer software.



*Enjoy another AFLC Schools
Christmas Concert
December 3, 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.*

Nelsons prepare for Portugal

AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein and Missionary David Nelson traveled to Portugal in October to meet with Pastor Artur Villares of Portugal and to find suitable housing for the Nelson family. The Nelsons plan to leave Brazil in December to begin serving as the first AFLC missionaries in Portugal.

Part of the trip was spent discussing and planning for the future of the Lutheran Church of Portugal. Pastors Nelson and Enderlein also worshipped with the Savior's Lutheran congregation on Sunday morning. Pastor Artur led the service, Pastor Enderlein shared a greeting and Pastor Nelson preached.

Much time was spent looking for housing for Missionaries David, Sarah and their four children. They saw a lot of options, did a lot of waiting, got acquainted with many taxi drivers and, finally, on Wednesday afternoon, found the apartment.

In Portuguese, it is called a "house." A house in the traditional sense of the word, however, is hard to find in the big city of Lisbon. On his last morning in Lisbon for this trip, Pastor Nelson signed a contract, rejoicing in how God had supplied.

The apartment is in the center of town and not far from where the congregation meets. They plan to take either a bus or subway to get to church. Walking in several directions they will be able to find a pharmacy, grocery store, clothing stores, electronics, and several other

stores and small restaurants. Even a McDonald's is nearby. The apartment is only four and a half blocks to the nearest subway stop. Bus transportation will also be easily available.

The Nelson's planned departure date from Brazil is December 4. Graduation from the Bible school in Brazil where the Nelsons have been serving will take place the end of November.

The Nelsons thank the Lord for their friends and co-workers in Brazil. They will leave with many fond memories, as well as wishes for God's continued blessing on the congregations, schools and social ministries of the Free Lutheran Church of Brazil.

Lisbon, Portugal is a large city with many cultures, peoples and spiritual needs. The Nelsons ask for prayer that the Lord will use the Lutheran Church of Portugal in a mighty way to fearlessly proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life.



Minneapolis, Minnesota — Faith Lutheran hosted the Minneapolis District WMF Rally on October 14. Pictured is Linda Korhonen leading the Bible study. The afternoon workshops were led by Ellen Monseth, Linda Johnson, and Brenda Stilley.

Missionaries Tim and Renata Hinrichs, missionaries in the Czech Republic, have a new email address. The old address, thinrichs@iol.cz, is no longer valid. The new address is: timandrenata@quick.cz. The Hinrichs returned to the U.S. on November 6 for medical treatment for Renata due to a difficult pregnancy.

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran hosted the Northwestern Minnesota District Women's Missionary Federation Rally on October 14. Seminary intern Peter Ward from Newfolden, Minnesota led the morning Bible study. The afternoon session included Kim (Mark) Schmitke of Alexandria, Minnesota sharing her testimony of God's faithfulness and showing His plan through physical struggles. Kim shares her testimony at various women's meetings around the state and may be contacted at 320-763-3461.

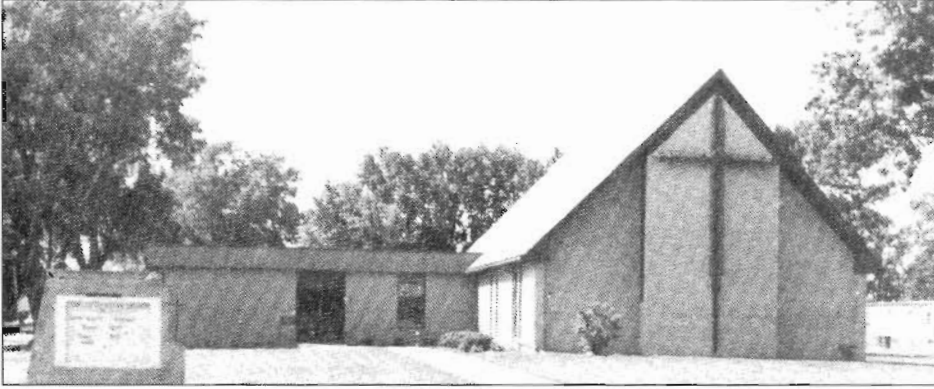
Dorothy J. Pentti, 60, Ishpeming, Michigan passed away on October 14, 2000 after a brief illness. She was a member of Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church where she was involved in many activities. Dorothy was the widow of AFLC Evangelist, Pastor Kenneth Pentti who died in 1985. She is survived by her mother, Ellie Hill of Ishpeming; four children: Rebecca (David) Beckman of Charlevoix, Michigan; Brian (Amy) Pentti of Rockford, Minnesota; Daniel Pentti of Bullhead City, Arizona; and David Pentti of Northville, Michigan; two sisters and one brother and five grandchildren. Funeral services were held on October 17 at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church with Pastor Michael Burke officiating. Burial was in the Ishpeming Cemetery.

Joel Finnesgard, Rancho Cucamonga, California has just released his second recording entitled, "Silver Christmas." He is devoting himself to full-time ministry in music. He played his trumpet at the AFLC Annual Conference last June for the Layman's Service. He may be contacted at www.joelfinnesgard.com.

AFLC Evangelism Director Jim Rasmussen, beginning October 21, spent four weeks in five parishes leading evangelism meetings. After his meetings in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Nebraska, he concluded with a series of services at Faith Lutheran in Lake Alma, Saskatchewan on November 11-15.

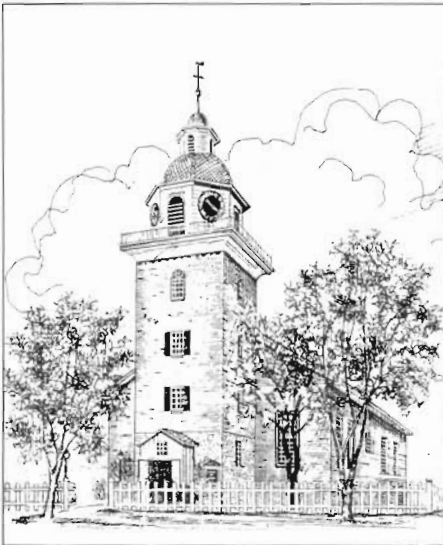
The AFLC Commission on Evangelism reports as of September 30, 2000, their income is at \$35,947, or 39% of the budgeted amount of \$91,200.

Two churches join the AFLC



United Lutheran, Laurel, Nebraska, recently voted to affiliate with the AFLC and their resolution was received by the coordinating committee on October 30. United Lutheran was formed in 1957 and was a member of the ELCA. Located in the northeast corner of Nebraska, the 455-member congregation has been served for over 25 years by Pastor Kenneth Marquardt.

Pastor Alvin Pinno and family are now living in Canada. Their new address is Box 2298, Nipawin, Saskatchewan, SOE 1EO. Pastor Pinno was the instructor at the 2000 Pastors' and Laymen Retreat at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Calgary, Alberta during October 16-20.



St. John's Lutheran, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, voted to affiliate with the AFLC and their resolution was accepted by the coordinating committee on October 30. St. John's, with a membership of 640, worships in a historic building constructed in 1823 and is served by Pastor Cletus Fahrion. Ambridge is located northwest of Pittsburgh and becomes the third AFLC church in western Pennsylvania, joining Ruthfred Lutheran and St. John's of Cranberry Township.

2001 Life Sunday Scheduled

Lutherans for Life's message for Life Sunday, January 21, 2001, is "Welcome a Little Child," based on Mark 9:37. Life Sunday commemorates the anniversary of the Roe v Wade decision of 1973 legalizing abortion in all nine months of pregnancy. To aid congregations in proclaiming the message, Lutherans for Life has produced Life Sunday bulletin inserts, sermons, and other materials that are usable throughout the year. For more information contact 1-888-364-LIFE or at orders@lutheransforlife.org.

Lester Landgren, Pipestone, Minnesota is available to give seminars on how to prevent pornography on the Internet from being available to your family via the home computer. Lester has his own computer business and is active at Christ the King Lutheran in Pipestone. For more information contact him at tristate@dtgnet.com.

Milford, Illinois — St. John's Lutheran of Schwer celebrated their 125th anniversary on October 29, 2000. Pastor Brian Davidson of Minneapolis was the guest speaker.



Glyndon, Minnesota — Maranatha Free Lutheran Church held a ground-breaking ceremony on Rally Sunday, September 10, 2000 between services. Pictured are Pastor Dale Finstrom (center), and the council members. Construction began that week and will continue as the approved funding has been received. The congregation also had the opportunity to name the street in front of their building and used I Corinthians 3:11 to name it. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." The address is now 110 Foundation Ave. SW, PO Box 94, Glyndon, MN 56547.

People & Places

The Lutheran Ambassador 2001 schedule

Below is the 2001 Lutheran Ambassador schedule. Please be in prayer for each issue. Note the deadlines and special emphasis of each issue. If you have an idea regarding a general article, a certain issue or an interest in writing, please contact the editors.

| <u>Date of Issue</u> | <u>Editor's Deadline</u> | <u>Special Emphasis</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| January 9 | December 8 | Evangelism |
| February 6 | January 5 | Soul care |
| February 27 | January 26 | AFLC Schools |
| March 20 | February 16 | Lent/Easter |
| April 10 | March 9 | Outreach |
| May 1 | March 30 | Pre-Conference |
| May 22 | April 20 | Testimonies |
| June 12 | May 11 | Children & Youth |
| July 3 | June 1 | Rest/Work |
| August 7 | June 29 | Conference Review |
| September 4 | August 3 | FLY Review |
| September 25 | August 24 | Sunday School |
| October 16 | September 14 | Missions |
| | | — Home & World |
| November 6 | October 5 | Reformation |
| November 27 | October 26 | Thanksgiving & Advent |
| December 18 | November 16 | Christmas |

Bold is for the 24 page issue, others are 16 pages

Rev. Dr. John Eldsmoe, professor of law at Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama, has been accepted on the AFLC clergy roster by the coordinating committee. A noted author and authority on constitutional law and religious freedom, he was formerly on the roster of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Rev. Dr. Rodger Foltz, Plymouth, Minnesota, was accepted on the AFLC clergy roster by the coordinating committee. Previously on the roster of the ELCA, he currently serves as senior pastor of Apostolic Lutheran in Plymouth. His wife Aila, is the daughter of the late Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, who taught at the AFLC seminary in 1964-1965.

Pastor Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minnesota has a new address: 932 Candy Circle, Kandiyohi, MN 56251; phone (320) 382-6550.

AFLC Memorial Gifts

Department given to
In memory of
AFLBS
Evelyn Peterson
Synnove Mathre
Gordon Skoglund
AFLTS
Vera Hjermstad
Vision 2004
Mary Jane Svendsen
Elizabeth Harder
World Missions
Gordon Melbye
Lenny Nelson
Home Missions
Owen Skjonsby
Paul Samuelson
Palmer Lee
Perdom Wold
Youth Ministries
Roland Olefson
Minnie Salvhus
General Fund
Kenneth Balstad
The ARC
Peter Westlake

Planned Giving

You can invest in the ministry of the AFLC through wills, charitable remainder trusts, etc. Call Mark Johnson at 1-800-950-2109

2001 youth ministry dates

Youth Workers' Retreat
January 12-14
The ARC
Osceola, Wisconsin
For more information call 1-888-748-3969.

Free Lutheran Youth National Convention

July 16-21
Estes Park Center
Estes Park, Colorado
For more information call 1-763-544-5631.

Cost break if pre-registered by March 1, or get an additional 30 days if registering online at www.aflc.org/youth. Have you ordered your FLY T-shirts for \$10?

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (10 months) – January 1 - October 31, 2000

| FUND | TOTAL Subsidy | REC'D IN OCTOBER | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | % TOTAL |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------|
| General Fund | \$252,865.00 | \$20,591.23 | 232,234.17 | 92 |
| Seminary | 118,291.00 | 7,367.39 | 79,716.96 | 67 |
| Bible School | 164,270.00 | 9,632.50 | 117,160.97 | 71 |
| Home Missions. | 262,125.00 | 22,565.21 | 195,848.56 | 75 |
| World Missions. | 239,968.00 | 16,218.12 | 130,384.18 | 54 |
| Capital Investment | 15,226.00 | 776.46 | 8,814.77 | 58 |
| Parish Education | 69,480.00 | 4,870.45 | 52,061.02 | 75 |
| Church Extension | 25,285.00 | 558.60 | 15,969.64 | 63 |
| TOTALS | \$1,147,510.00 | 82,579.96 | 832,190.27 | 73 |
| TOTALS 1999 | 1,013,386.00 | 72,143.20 | 792,243.35 | 78 |
| Goal 83% | | | | |
| Evangelism department received \$3,964.30 in October. | | | | |

Giving evidence of the victory

He was a successful basketball coach. His teams won far more games than they lost. It was difficult to discern that, however, from the attitude he often had when being interviewed.

Ralph Miller might have been a rather cheerful person away from the basketball court, but whenever he was being interviewed he found something to complain about. At times his team won the game by 30 points. They were in first place in the conference, but what the coach was talking about was how poorly they played and how they should have done better. If all you saw was the scowl on his face and his grumbling, you would have thought his team had suffered an embarrassing defeat.

When the world looks at us who claim to be Christians, when they listen to us talk, when they observe our attitude, do they know that the side we are on has won?

The Bible says, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:57, NIV). It also describes us as "more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37, NIV). Christ has won the victory over sin and death. Through Him we are on the winning side.

We demonstrate this by what we talk about the most. The ones on the winning team give thanks to their teammates and talk about how great it is to win. They often mention the strength of their opponent, but then give thanks that their team was better.

In a similar way let us talk the most about the One who gives us the victory. We do have an enemy, the devil, who is strong. But thanks be to God, Jesus is stronger. We do live in a world that is evil and corrupt. But we have a Savior who has overcome the world.

It is easy for the wickedness of the world, the errors of other churches, the foolishness and shortcomings of other Christians and the dangers that are at hand to become the main things that fill our thoughts and come out of our mouths. That results in people more filled with fear of the world than joy because of Jesus.

Sin is not to be glossed over or excused. We are to be aware of the devil's schemes and warn of danger. But let us have balance. May our conversations demonstrate that our Lord has won the victory. May the one we talk about the most be Jesus and how

great He is and how thankful we are for Him. May we do as the Apostle Paul and "preach Christ crucified" (I Corinthians 1:23, NIV).

We demonstrate that we are on the victorious side by the way we approach trials and challenges. I've watched games that have been previously recorded. I've known the team I was rooting for won. During the game they get behind and it doesn't look good, but I don't get too worried. I know who wins.

When we are in Christ we can approach life in a similar fashion. Troubles come but we can endure and overcome because we know how it is going to end. The little details that go wrong need not upset us so. In Christ we see the big picture and final result.

The temptation to worry comes so often. When Jesus was in her home, Martha got distracted by the many things that had to be done and the others who she didn't think were helping out as they should. Jesus told her, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed" (Luke 10:41, 42, NIV).

A fumble here, a messed-up play there didn't upset me all that much when I already knew my team had won. Likewise a problem here, something not working out the way you wanted it to, somebody not doing what you wish they would have, it all becomes far less upsetting and worrisome when we view it in light of what Jesus has done. Those details don't change the ending.

Victories in one contest give confidence for future tests. That should be true for the child of God. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31, 32, NIV). The Lord who has won victory over sin and death can most certainly handle the challenges we face. They are too much for us, but not for the Lord of the universe.

Thankfulness and hopefulness are the attitudes that are to be the theme of the Thanksgiving and Advent seasons, and also the attitudes that people should see throughout the year as they look at our lives. Why whine, grumble and complain when we have such a great Savior? Why worry when we have such a glorious hope? Let us give thanks, worship and rejoice because of what we have and what is to come because of Jesus.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

***"...do they
know that
the side we
are on has
won?"***

The end of the story

“**T**ruly this man was the Son of God.” These are the words uttered by the centurion who was charged with guarding Jesus during His crucifixion. What irony for this to be said by a Roman centurion carrying out the execution of a Jewish peasant who had been condemned for His audacious claim of being a King. Why would a man, appointed to guard a Jewish peasant, come to such a conclusion when before his very eyes, this peasant is brutally beaten, mocked without mercy, and nailed and left to die on a cross?

Maybe he could have said, “He was innocent,” or “He took his execution well,” or “He was a peculiar man.” — but the Son of God?

They say about George Washington — a great general; Abraham Lincoln — a great president; Moses — a great lawgiver; Napoleon — a great conqueror; but what about Jesus Christ, the Jewish peasant from Nazareth? About Him they say the Son of God.

The Son of God certainly implies beauty and exaltation, not a revolting piece of humanity ripped and torn, and nailed to a tree, bloody, bruised, a wretched and pitiful sight. Surely the Son of God would be escorted into this world with a myriad of angels, glory and splendor which had never been witnessed; not a baby lying helplessly in a cow trough, in a place fit only for animals, filled with swarms of insects and the constant smell of manure. The teenager Mary, having just experienced the excruciating pain of giving birth, had to do so on a bed of dirt and manure.

No, the sight was not pretty. Let us shake off the imaginations presented in nativity scenes sold at Wal-Mart. Surely the Son of God would be raised in a palace, with no luxury spared, for isn't this how the



elite in the world expect to be treated? Not in a lowly peasant hut in Nazareth; after all, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Surely too, the Son of God would not labor, but would be served His heart's desire with servants at His side to wait for His order — not a carpenter. Surely the Son of God would be lauded and worshipped by all and most fervently by His own. But He served — instead of worshipped, spit upon; instead of honor, mocked; instead of glory, beaten; instead of exaltation, crushed; instead of halos, a crown of thorns; instead of supremacy, scorned; instead of praise, punched; and instead of power, persecuted.

Look carefully at Jesus' words in Luke 4, where Jesus is handed the book of Isaiah and begins to read in Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” Jesus then proceeded to close the book and sat down, and while all eyes focused on Him, He said,

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus read verse one and the first half of the second verse, then closed the book.

What Jesus is declaring is that this is His first appearing and He will fulfill what He read in the synagogue. He became one of us. He was rejected and scorned (Isaiah 53), and finally viciously executed. Thus He fulfilled His mission. The once blind may see and those who were captive under the power of sin and death can be free, and the grace of God through faith in the Son of God is being proclaimed throughout the world.

This, however, is not the end of the story. The last half of verse two says, “And the day of vengeance of our God.” That speaks of a second appearing of the Son of God, who will indeed come in glory and power. Revelation 19:11-16 tells us:

“And I saw heaven opened; and behold a white horse and He who sat upon it is called faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems, and He has a name written upon him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dripped in blood; and His name is called the word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed with fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads down the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

“Truly He is the Son of God.”

— Rick Tollefson
Helmar Lutheran
Newark, Illinois