

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

November 23, 1999

God be merciful
to us and bless us,
And cause his
face to shine
upon us.

That your
way may be
known on
earth,

Your
salvation
among all
nations.

— Psalm 67:1,2



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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CONTENTS

Thankfulness in hope p. 4

My heart overflows p. 5

God's promises still hold true! p. 6

He is coming again! p. 10

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Let us give thanks

One of the first prayers I learned and prayed as a child was this: "We give thanks unto Thee O Lord for Thy many blessings. Amen." It was a prayer I was taught to pray following every meal we shared as a family. Yes, there was always prayer before we shared the meal, but Dad always reminded us to give thanks after taking part, even if it was just leftovers. Looking back I realize the significance of that prayer. Not always in the years of drought and the depression was there an abundance in a material sense, but Dad always seemed to be aware that God's bounty to himself and his family was much more than material blessings. I remember him saying of those years, "We didn't have much, but we always had food; the Lord took good care of us."

Again on November 25 we as a nation will observe Thanksgiving Day. For some it will be a day off from work, spent with relatives, lots of food, hours of football, but not much giving of thanks. I trust for most it will truly be a time to pause and give thanks for His many blessings to us. Many tables will have a horn of plenty as a centerpiece. It symbolizes bountiful blessings which God has poured out to us. Certainly here in west central Minnesota the crops again this year have been bountiful, and together with the farmers, we are thankful.

We are also thankful for bounty of the intangible. As always His love, grace, forgiveness and mercy have come to us in unlimited supply. He has been true to His Word as found in

Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." For all He has bestowed, we give thanks.

It has often been said that the Christian life is a life of "thanks living" as a daily response to our heavenly Father. As we pause this Thanksgiving our thanks will be heard as we bow in prayer before Him that has so wonderfully blessed us. May we be encouraged to let our gratitude show in our daily living. May we be encouraged to let our gratitude be experienced by others as we share both the material and the spiritual blessings with which we have been entrusted. In Matthew 10:8 Jesus says, "freely you have received, freely give."

The writer of the hymn "Count Your Blessings" reminds us in the third verse that Christ has promised wealth untold. "Count your many blessings, name them one by one; Count your many blessings, see what God hath done." And in Psalm 103:2, the psalmist says "Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits." Yes, let us give thanks.



— **Pastor Elden Nelson**
Maranatha Lutheran
Willmar, Minnesota

sound bites

I'm not sure we take Jesus seriously about His Return. We procrastinate too much. One of these days I am

1 going to start reading the Bible ... One of these days I am going to tell my neighbor about my Savior ... One of these days I am going to get serious about my relationship with Christ, and we continue living as if we think we have all the time in the world.

— *Pastor Joel Lohafer*

We should learn to bring our eyes, our hearts and souls to bear upon yonder life in heaven and in a lively hope

4 await it with joy. For if we would be Christians, the ultimate objects of our quest should not be marriage, buying, selling

But our ultimate quest should be something better and higher: the blessed inheritance in heaven that does not pass away.

— *Martin Luther*

6

Thankfulness is a matter of opening our eyes and looking past our circumstances to see and to enjoy God's good.

— *Karen Dockrey*

2

If our hearts were turned to praise, we should see causes unnumbered, which we had never seen before, for thanking God.

— *Priscilla Maurice*

Thanksgiving is from the same root word as

3

“think,” so that to think is to thank.

— *Willis P. King*

In your prayer, do not hesitate to thank the Lord for all that he gives. This is often difficult since we are not always willing to receive some of the “gifts” which make little sense to us. Yet all is a gift from God.

— *Chris Aridas*

5

Thankfulness in Hope



— **Pastor Jim Vineyard**
Good Shepherd Lutheran
Pleasanton, Texas

Thanksgiving and Advent — that these two holiday seasons are

The Lord has done this for me,” (Elizabeth) said. “In these days he has shown me his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people (Luke 1:25, NIV).

connected may be coincidental, but I believe there is a divine purpose for the placement of the two together. Elizabeth’s own situation illuminates the relationship the two have to each other. Thanksgiving with its emphasis upon what has already happened, and Advent with its focus upon the hope that is yet to be realized, all come to pass in Elizabeth’s prayer that Luke records.

To better understand Elizabeth’s prayer, we need to understand her situation. At that time and place, for a woman to be childless was a sign of disfavor from God. Only someone who had “sinned” grievously against God would be so punished. For a married woman to be childless was almost as sinful as an unmarried woman who was with child.

Zechariah and Elizabeth had borne this shame until they were both aged. But this had not prevented them from praying to God to remove this blemish from their lives, to demonstrate that no sin marred this part of their lives. God had not appeared to answer. However, God was answering all the time, waiting for the perfect time to come.

And it did come.

In his confrontation with Gabriel in the temple, Zechariah received God’s answer to his prayers. Though struck dumb, Zechariah must have communicated with Elizabeth the angel’s message, so that when Elizabeth knew she was pregnant, she could be thankful for more than just a child. Elizabeth hadn’t just been blessed with a child in her old age; she had been blessed by becoming the mother of the forerunner of the Messiah, the promised consolation of Israel! Elizabeth’s prayer of thanks was also a prayer of hope, because God’s favor included more than just a child, it included the promise of the coming Savior of the world!

We see this attitude of hope displayed later in Luke’s Gospel, when the barely pregnant Mary comes from Nazareth to visit Elizabeth. When Elizabeth sees Mary, and the baby in Elizabeth’s womb senses the Savior in Mary,

Elizabeth experiences something of an epiphany and cries out, both in thankfulness and in hope. “But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished” (Luke 1:44,45, NIV).

Elizabeth’s words and prayer guide us today. We give thanks for all that has happened in the past, recognizing that only because of God’s providential blessing we have anything at all. We also anticipate greater things, not only because of Jesus’ first advent, His birth in Bethlehem so many years ago, but also because of His promise to return to make all things right. As we look around us, we see the need for this thankfulness and hope. When we observe all of the tragedies and terrible events, were it not for our attitude of thankfulness and hope, it would be so easy to slide into despair and depression.

Unlike Elizabeth and Mary, we don’t have an obvious due date for our hope. But that doesn’t make our hope any less real. Christ could return in the very near future or He may not come

back until long after we are ancient history. Our hope is not based upon a timeline, but upon the Lord of the timeline. Just as Elizabeth’s time of favor and the removal of her disgrace wasn’t in her own timing,

but in God’s perfect timing, so too, our time of perfected rejoicing and thankfulness will happen in God’s perfect timing.

Until then, we need to remain thankful that we have a Lord of perfect timing, who continually takes care of us and blesses us daily. We also should remain firm in our hope of His accomplishing what He has promised. Thankfulness in hope isn’t just for Elizabeth’s time, it isn’t just a month of the year, it’s an eternal attitude. Thanksgiving and Advent are a perfect balance to help us keep this attitude in heart and mind.

*We give thanks
for the gift of waiting.*



In Canada and also in the United States, we have set aside a special weekend for Thanksgiving. This is good, but there is a danger that most of our celebration is centered in family, friends, and in a huge turkey dinner, rather than giving thanks to God for His bounty and grace. As I reflect on what I am most thankful for, I must share five things.

ONE

Above everything I am thankful to God for Jesus and for salvation. I thank God for the blessed assurance that Jesus is mine. Nothing in all the world compares to this treasure.

One day at Bible camp this summer a middle-aged lady came to me and said, "Mr. Friggstad, I don't have this peace in my heart you were talking about and I don't have the assurance of salvation. I have gone to church all my life. I have it all in my head."

Then she placed her hands on her chest and added, "But in here I have nothing. I am empty inside."

I responded, "You need to let Jesus come into your heart." After sharing many Scriptures with her, relating to man's need as a sinner, to God's provision in Jesus and to the importance of responding to God's invitation, she prayed, and asked God to forgive her sins and asked Jesus to come into her heart that she might have the assurance of salvation. She became a new creature in Christ, filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for His saving grace.

TWO

I thank God for my dear wife, Carol. We will soon celebrate 57 years of marriage. With Jesus in our hearts and in our home, we have had a beautiful life. Through the good times and the bad times, she has constantly been at my side as my friend, my companion and as my dear wife. God blessed us with seven children. All are married and there are no broken relationships. We praise God. We enjoy 21 grandchildren and have seen our first great-grandchild. Our children love and respect each other and continually show love and concern for Carol and myself. We are thankful to God for our family.

THREE

At age 78, I have seen decades come and go. With the passing of time, we see decay and corruption coming to our countries like a flood. Our governments and our educators together with the media and the courts seems to be yielding to the pressures of evil to the point where there are no longer any fixed standards between right and wrong. Moral standards are being swept away, leaving in its wake, despair and hopelessness. Against this background, I render thanks that the Word of God stands firm. "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

My heart overflows

— by **Evangelist Olaf Friggstad**
Bethel Lutheran
Frontier, Saskatchewan



FOUR

God has blessed me with good health and boundless energy for most of my life. As a farmer, a manufacturer and an evangelist, my life has been full. I have experienced success and failure. I wrote a book entitled, "Faith When Dreams Die," in which I share the importance of having faith in God when your world crumbles at your feet. I know something about the valley.

It was in the valley I prayed to God and asked Him to forgive me for ever saying, "Why me, Lord? Why should these things happen to me?" It was there I thanked God saying, "I know You are right here with me. Please God, give me grace to trust you more." There in that valley, the destructive emotions of pride, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit and jealousy threatened to destroy my life. It was there that God set me free from these destructive forces and lifted me up and set my feet on higher ground. I thank God for the valley.

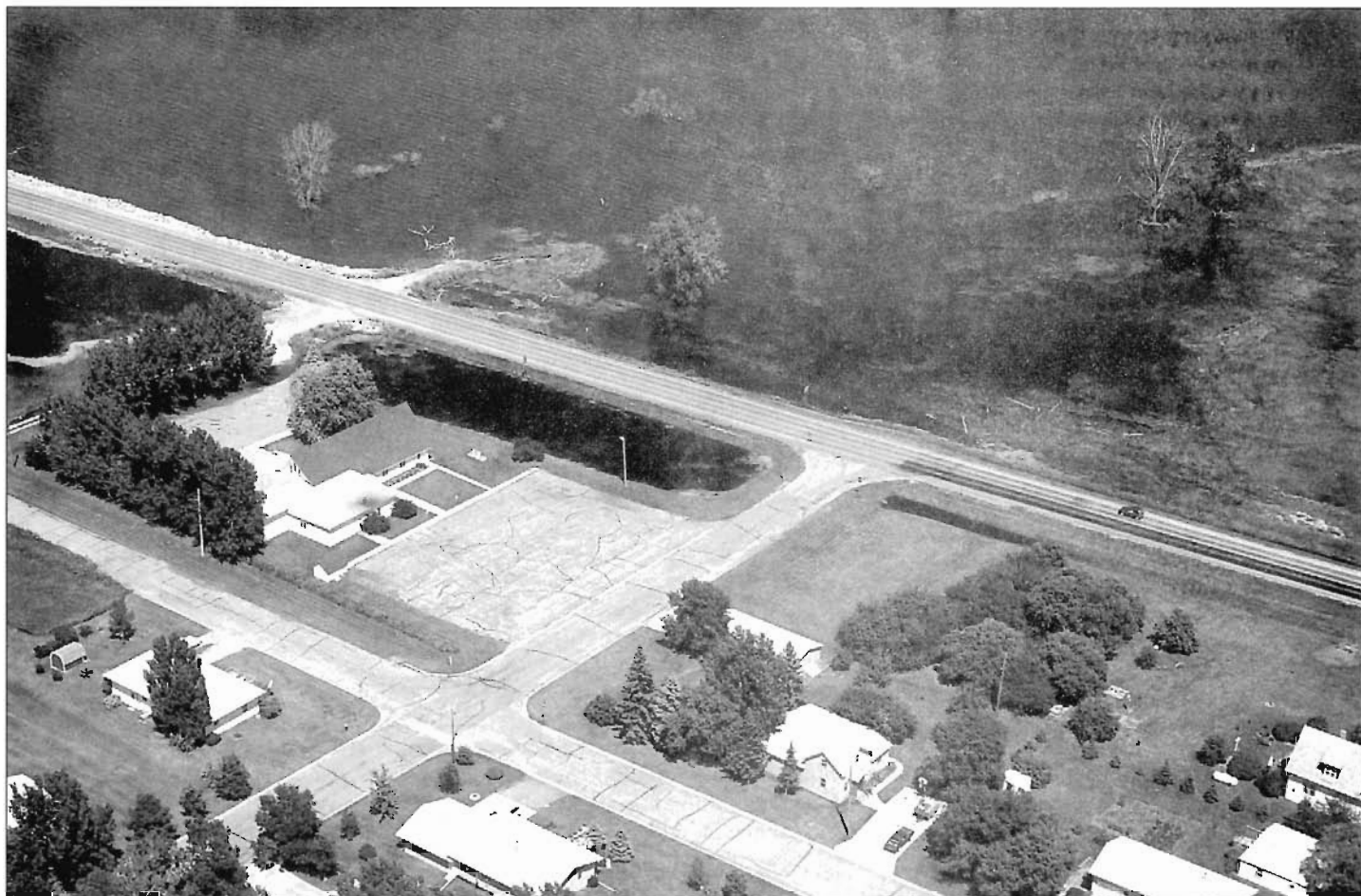
FIVE

I thank God for an overflowing hope (Romans 15:13). Peter refers to it as a living hope in I Peter 1:3-6. The writer to the Hebrews in chapter six refers to the certainty of God's promise, and declares in verse 19, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul." I like that. A ship's anchor reaches down to the bottom of the sea where it grips solid ground to keep the ship from drifting in the time of storm. Faith's anchor reaches up to Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, where it is securely anchored to the promises of God.

One day, and it may be soon, I will see Jesus and then I will be like Him — perfect and complete. I thank God for this living hope!

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"
(I Thessalonians 5:8).





— by Dawn Johnson
*Trinity and Christ Lutheran Parish
 Minnewaukan, North Dakota*

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks, but giving thanks is not to be done just at Thanksgiving. God's Word says in I Thessalonians 5:18, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." When things

are going well it is easy to be thankful. But there are times of difficulty when we may find it hard to be thankful. Those are the times when we need to lean more on our Lord and search out and stand on the promises of His Word. God promised Joshua in Joshua 1:5, "I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." That promise is there today for us as well if we will just claim it.

Over the past few years our community has faced some times of difficulty. The rising water of Devils Lake has made national news in recent years. Trinity Free Lutheran in Minnewaukan is now literally on the shore of this ever-expanding lake. Minnewaukan is a small North Dakota town of about 400 people. The town used to be eight miles from Devils Lake, but now the water laps beside the streets. In 1993 the lake covered approximately 40,000 acres. Now it is a little over 100,000 acres, having risen approximately 25 feet. Coming into Minnewaukan from any direction you see the water before you reach the town. It is really quite a sight.

The water has affected people's lives in

GOD'S PROMISES STILL HOLD TRUE!

many ways. It has taken over farmland which has meant loss of acreage and income for numerous ranchers and farmers. Cattle ranchers are being forced to sell out as their pasture lands are overtaken by the water. Some who have just a small portion of their land still dry, now are concerned whether or not the water will take over this as well. Many homes have had to be moved or abandoned around the lake already, including some near and in Minnewaukan.

Here in our little town we are faced with the trouble of the ground saturation affecting the underground water and sewer systems of the town. In the rural areas some are having to buy their drinking water. We are dealing with many unanswered questions. Will our family farm only be seen in our photo albums? Will life-long residents of this town be forced to leave everything they have ever known? Will we at least be able to move our house to higher ground?

Our church, Trinity Free Lutheran, is safe for now. The church is situated at a level of a little over 1450 above sea level and the water level of Devils Lake is around 1447. The highway in front of the church works like a dike now that a culvert has been plugged. This causes the ditch in front of the church to gather rain water in it, which has to be pumped out throughout the summer. There is a possibility that the church may have to be moved in the future. For now we are above water.

Our community suffers from great stress. The worst of it for many families is not knowing what lies ahead as far as their livelihood is concerned. Please pray for us. Government officials and programs promise solutions to the problems, but only God's promises hold true through the tough times as well as the good times. We know Who holds the future and that is a great promise to hold on to!



“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Though the earth should change,
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;
Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling place of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Come, behold the works of the Lord,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
‘Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.’
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

— Psalm 46:1-11



Trinity Free Lutheran is now only a few feet away from the rising Devils Lake.



Thankful to be on the team

—Darwin Jackson
Puebla, Mexico

AFLC missionary on loan to World Mission Prayer League

It was just about ten years ago I walked out of a downtown Seattle courthouse with my long blonde hair, black leather jacket, blue jeans and black redwing welding boots a married man. If I were asked the question then: “looking back on the last decade, what are you most thankful for?” I’d have to say that was just about it. God had been so good to us, giving us a loving daughter, a beautiful home on five wooded western Washington acres, a good job working with a great group of guys. How blessed could a man be? It would have been a great happy ending to an old movie. How I thanked God for His goodness to us.

But even with all those blessings, I’d have to say that God topped all of that when He made us rich, giving us a whole new set of clothes and buying us a mansion on a street paved with gold by the crystal river that has fruit trees that never run out of fruit. When the Holy Spirit revealed the Lord Jesus to us, that would have to be the thing that we are most thankful for. He has made marriage so much more happier and deeper since Jesus came into our lives. God has enlarged our family by giving so many loving brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, even grandmas and grandpas. And we have found more just about wherever we go. Not only that but they come in different colors and speak different languages. Oh, how we thank God for life lived in the love of the Lord Jesus.

But there is something that even tops all of these riches; something that makes me stop and wonder and give thanks with all my soul. The great Apostle Paul said it this way, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).

To think that Almighty God would choose

to give Mary Ann and me the grace to serve Him. That blows me away.

When I was a kid in school, I was always the last one chosen to be on a team because I was small and not a very good ball player, and of course they wanted to win so they chose the best first.

Doesn’t God want to win? I could see choosing Paul ... but me? There is truly no experience in the world like being an ambassador of Jesus. Just think, “on behalf of Christ” (2 Cor 5:20). We were chosen to be on His team, representing Him; that’s awesome!

Last week I took a couple of brethren to visit a man who has been having a lot of problems in his life lately. His wife and daughter left him, he broke his foot really bad so that he needed four long screws in it. He can’t work and doesn’t have insurance. He barely makes it selling candy and Coca-Cola out of his living room. After visiting with him a while, hearing of his string of bad luck, a thrill went through my heart as I knew I had something that would change his whole life. I told him that I had the best news for him that he’s ever heard. He said, “you do?” I said, “I sure do.” I explained to him the greatest story ever told: that a loving God sent His only beloved, innocent Son to pay for our sins on an old rugged cross. If we would only trust in Him and receive Him into our hearts we will be forgiven for everything that we’ve ever done and we can receive an abundant, eternal life. When I asked him if he was ready to leave off his sins and trust in Jesus and receive Him into his life, with tears in his eyes he said, “yes.” We prayed together and new life was born. Oh how wonderful it is to serve on the winning team of the living God.

Yes, more than life, more than being free, I’m thankful I can serve the living Lord Jesus.



Light with care the Advent wreath

Light with care the Advent wreath,
lift it high to light our path;
lead us to the Babe of life,
turn our hearts to his employ.

Light the prophets candle, first
hear the story told of old,
words of love and sin forgiv'n,
God's unending love for us.

Bethlehem the second light,
city of the Savior's birth,
we prepare to see his star,
God's eternal sign of hope.

Light the third, the shepherd's wick,
Shepherds in the fields at night,
Darkness fills the world today,
as it did that Christmas night.

Light the angel's candle, last,
hear their song of love and joy,
Jesus finally born on earth,
God's great plan has been fulfilled.



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— by Pastor Roger Tappert
St. Mark's Lutheran
Indianapolis, Indiana

Living with hope

Hopeless silence. That was the sound I heard a few weeks ago when the electricity went out at the office building where I work. There is something quite unnerving about a whole floor full of busy workers and whirring computers suddenly falling dead silent. Everyone seemed to pause for a brief moment as if the sound of silence was something completely foreign to them. Eventually those who had been working on something that relied on electricity began to realize there was a pretty good chance they would be working late.

As I was sitting there wondering what to do with this sudden change in schedule, the Lord used the opportunity to gently remind me of some basic truths. He will come soon (Joel 3:14). When He comes, He will come quickly (Luke 17:24). Concerns, fears, questions and doubts can all occur in our minds when we are reminded of the truth about the second coming of Jesus.

And if we know that Christ may return within the next decade, how should we live?

Consider for a moment a few of the words that we say often in church — words found in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus Himself has given us cause to consider His coming again with the very words "Thy Kingdom Come." What does this mean? Martin Luther's Small Catechism explains it this way: "The Kingdom of God comes indeed of itself without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may come also to us." Luther goes on to explain how this is done: "The kingdom of God comes to us when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth and in heaven forever."

The words from the catechism talk about living a godly life. This seems, at first, like it may be a worthy goal for us to pursue with the time we have left. However, what do we see when we look at our own life? There are some

What's important

I was up to my elbows in dishes, diapers and dirty laundry a few weeks ago when my friend called. Would I consider writing for *The Lutheran Ambassador* about the new millennium and the future return of Christ for His Church? The question was: "How should we live if we really believe that Jesus will return?"

My first thought was, "Oh my, I don't have time to even think about those issues, important as they are! I have six young children and many days find it difficult to slow down and take time to pray, much less meditate and write!" The urgent details of everyday life — paying the bills, wiping runny noses, cleaning up messes, endless telephone calls — fill my day and push out the truly important things of my life as God's child. Then my soul confessed, "Yes, I need to catch my breath and think about eternal things. Thank You, Lord."

Jesus Himself told us, "Keep watch, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming ... Be ready" (Matthew 24:42,44). If I truly believe Jesus and His Word, shouldn't I be out there "doing something for the Lord," something "important" like leading a Bible study, participating in a retreat or missions trip, wit-

nessing door-to-door, studying the Greek New Testament or simply meditating on some great Bible truth? But then I'm reminded of Colossians 3:17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Yes, I'm already doing something for the Lord, right here in my home with my family. Each one of us as Christians has a ministry in the situation God has placed us in — whether it is to our families, as pastor of a church, the exhilarating or dull job in the workplace, tending cows or crops, or perhaps it's giving the light of Christ to the nurses from a hospital bed.

Thinking about Christ's return, serves to motivate, thrill, and even frighten me a little. In college I always hoped Jesus would appear during final exam week and deliver me! Now out on the ranch in the western prairies, I am often reminded of the Scripture, "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption ... the whole creation groans" (Romans 8:21,22). Our world is so beautiful and yet so sad. Lord Jesus, come quickly!

My response must be twofold. First, my own spiritual house must be in order so that I am ready to meet Christ. As a mother, the second part of my response to the reality of Jesus' coming again is to see to it,

— by **Kevin Olson**
Faith Lutheran
Minneapolis, Minnesota

who think they can please God on their own strength. This kind of thinking results in a life of wandering alone, aimlessly trying to throw a facade of godliness over a heart filled with works-righteousness and self-interest.

There are still others who have heard the words of the law that are found in the Bible. These know all too well their sin and total depravity; they constantly struggle with it. They know that left to their own devices they would be unable to please God. Thanks be to God that He does not leave us after the law has done its work. Read the answers to the questions from the catechism again; see the blessed truth of the gospel! It is by His grace alone that we can hear His Word and live a godly life here on earth, both today and ten years from now. To be more precise it is in fact not "our" life at all, but the Holy Spirit works through the Word and the sacraments to give us a new life, that is, to give us Jesus. "For with thee is the fountain of life; In thy light we see light" (Psalm 36:9). What a

"What a burden can be lifted as the Christian, by faith, comes to know why Christ taught us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come.'"

burden can be lifted as the Christian, by faith, comes to know why Christ taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come."

Later at work that day the lights came back on, the copy machines began warming up, the computer monitors sprang to life and the quietness was ended. So, in a similarly predictable fashion, the gentle reminders that the Lord had given me were soon lost in the hurried remains of the day. Soon though, our days on this earth will be over and we will know, without ever doubting again, that "we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:17b,18).



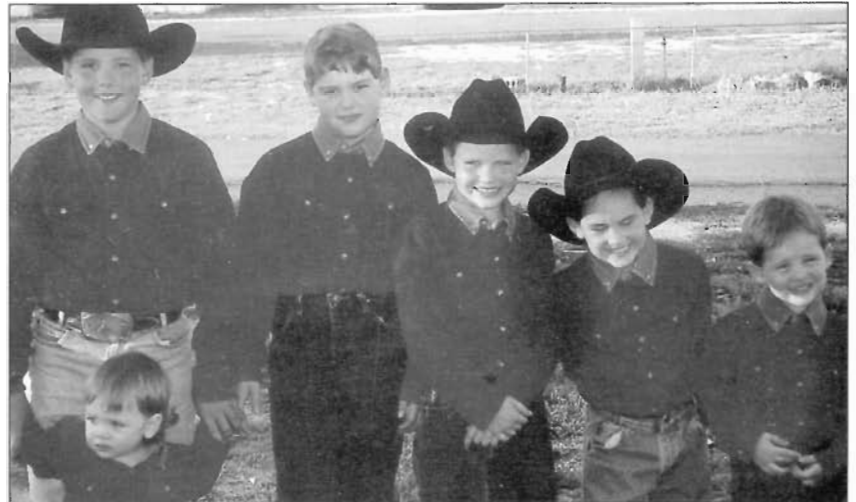
— by **Joni Hunt**
Bethel Lutheran
Faith, South Dakota

by God's grace, that my children are prepared to meet the Savior.

Like the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, I believe we are all stewards and will have to give an account of what we have been entrusted with. God has given my husband and me five sons and one daughter. We as parents are responsible to God for their training, although it is tempting to try to shift some of the responsibility to the pastor, teachers or grandparents. Certainly these people can and should have an important influence in the lives of children, but in the words of a former president, "the buck stops here." It is my prayer that when I see Jesus face to face, I will not be ashamed and He can say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

So how do I prepare my children to meet the Lord, and if He tarries, to stand firm in a world so often hostile to Him?

First, teach them to love the Word and search it for answers (Deuteronomy 11:18-21). It is not enough to just read a few verses on Sunday morning. They must see and hear the Word demonstrated in my own personal holiness and as a part of their lives daily throughout the



The author's family.

week. Second, teach them to pray about everything with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6,7), and in so doing, they will have peace in a hectic world. And last but not least, teach them as they grow to understand and accept Christ's sacrificial gift of life for themselves.

Whether Christ's sure return is imminent or delayed, I don't need to be overly preoccupied with "when." it is enough to know that He will. So how should I live today? I should live, work, and pray everyday as if He will return tomorrow, but prepare as though He will not come for 100 years. "May those who come behind us find us faithful."





Harvest Festivals have made their annual appearances at many AFLC congregations. Mexico Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk spoke at Calvary Lutheran's festival in Everett, Washington. The offering at the ham dinner was matched by Lutheran Brotherhood.

Spencer Creek Lutheran in Eugene, Oregon hosted a creative vegetable harvest party, including a contest to determine the most unique serving dish. Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran of Dalton, Minnesota had their meatball supper funds matched and divided the proceeds between Vision 2004 and their local church parking lot project.

Gathering together. The congregation in Naknek, Alaska did not have a women's organization until this fall when they began "Fit For Service." According to Sharon

Why I am thankful to be living at this time in history

Last August, a *U.S. News and World Report* issue featured an article on life and historical events taking place at the end of the first millennium. As I read that article, I thought of how very thankful I am to have lived at the end of the second millennium instead of the first.

If I had lived a thousand years ago, I would most likely have been a peasant living a short life of struggle to survive. I would have had no hope of education and thus, would have been unable to read or write.

Though some lights were shining on the horizon pointing to better possibilities in days ahead (far into the future); in that first millennium,

the gospel truths were dim and true knowledge of God was limited to a few people. Historical events had recently occurred that gave hope for a more stable and peaceful Europe in which the seeds of Christianity could flourish. The conversion of the feared Vikings to Christianity and the conversion of the equally feared Magyars (who became the nation of Hungary) when King Stephen was baptized are good examples.

If I had lived then I would not have been able to read the Bible for myself or sing the sweet songs of salvation.

If I had lived then I would not have heard or read about the great

Olson, "The first half of our time together is reading from a book on health from a Christian perspective, having devotions and prayer time. The last half is spent exercising with a Christian exercise video." The ladies meet for an hour each Tuesday and Thursday evening.

Ruthfred Lutheran women in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, have an opportunity to minister through their "Craft & Sew" group which is

now sewing lap robes, hospital gowns, and walker bags for area nursing homes. They are also making favors for their annual women's christmas dinner.

Abiding Savior Lutheran in Sioux Falls, South Dakota held a "Workshop For Women" one Saturday this fall from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., in place of their regular October WMF meeting. The day included a featured speaker, mini-sessions, mixers, praise singing, and lunch.

New Vision Lutheran women in Spokane, Washington, enjoy Thursday morning home Bible study and prayer each week. This is in addition to their regular WMF meetings.

Curitiba, Brazil, churches have been busy with baby showers and a ladies' tea among other activities. Missionary Becky Abel wrote, "Behind every great program there is lots of planning and prayer so that we can make the most of every opportunity. Pray for us as we reach out in so many different ways to share Jesus and encourage people in their faith."



Ny Stavanger Lutheran of Buxton, North Dakota hosted 74 ladies for their district WMF rally. They heard Missionary David Nelson share the challenges and blessings in Brazil.

— by Joan Udden
*Medicine Lake Lutheran
 Plymouth, Minnesota*

heroes of more recent centuries who risked and gave their lives to spread the gospel around the world.

If I had lived then, I would not have heard about the great revivals that affected the Europeans immigrating to America, and the later revivals in America affecting us even today. I also would not have heard about the great revivals in China and in many nations of Africa.

If I had lived one thousand years ago, I would have missed seeing the work of God evident in the lives of so many people I have known or read about. I would have missed living in a country with unprecedented freedoms and opportunities.

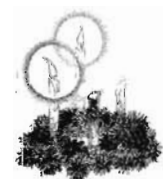
If I had lived then, I probably would not have known the joy of a personal relationship with the living God, for which I am thankful above all else. Yes, I am grateful to be living after the birth of Jesus Christ, and to have been born in a nation so blessed by God's favor, for "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

I am thankful to be alive in this place, at this time. God is good.

Let us remember to give thanks and praise to God for all His great mercies to us. "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good, because His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 118:1).



You can help spread the light!



The AFLC Foundation is a permanent fund established and maintained by contri-

butions to assist in carrying out the charitable purposes of the coordinating committee of the AFLC, the schools corporation, the missions corporation, and the Association Retreat Center, Inc.

Call for a free consultation:
 1-800-950-2109

Mark D. Johnson
 AFLC development consultant

Two faculty members to teach in Eastern Europe and India in January

Dr. Francis Monseth is again scheduled to teach next January at Estonia's Tartu Academy and in the nearby nation of Latvia. Dr. Monseth is returning for the seventh time to lead seminars in those East European nations.

Also during the Free Lutheran Seminary's January inter-term, Pastor Phil Haugen will travel to India for two weeks of teaching the Indian evangelists and Bible women. He will go with World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein and others who are considering joining them. "We would love to take pastors and lay people with us. Our presence is seen as so vital to the church in India. It's a means of opening many doors to witness," Pastor Enderlein said. If you are interested in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, call the world missions office at (612) 545-5631.

Aguascalientes, Mexico —

Spring of Living Water Lutheran is considering extending a call to one of their own pastors, who recently completed theological and pastoral studies. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles started the church in 1985 when they began their ministry in Aguascalientes. The Giles, the congregation and the world mission committee is prayerfully considering a future location for the Giles to initiate mission work. Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk, now home on furlough, expect to return to Mexico next fall. Their future location of service is also under prayerful consideration.

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson, Osceola, Wisconsin, continue to visit congregations while on furlough. They are planning to return to Campo Mourão, Brazil, in May of 2000. Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel will be coming to the States in May to begin their furlough year.



See the mission field yourself

Partners in Mission Outreach plans January trip to Mexico

On January 7, 2000 the PIMO bus will head to the Obregon area for a two-week mission trip to help Pastor Gabriel Mercado and the people from Triumph Lutheran in the village of Agraristas.

Last summer, youth from Ruth-fred Lutheran in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania traveled with the PIMO bus group. Their Youth Worker Brenda Stilley wrote, "During our entire trip we knew God's hand was moving among us. Several youth did not want to come home. Being in a strange, foreign country and relying on God for everything really appealed to them. Living in the U.S. may be more comfortable than Mexico, but sometimes we get too comfortable and forget what it is to depend on God completely for all things."

The cost of the January trip is approximately \$575 per person plus approximately \$100 for personal spending money.

For more information call Al Brazier at (218) 782-2456 or e-mail at aflcpimo@means.net.

Pastor Eugene Enderlein left on November 3 for two weeks in India to pursue possible land purchase or the development of current properties. A gift was given to the AFLC-India church which included a time frame to be used. Pastor Enderlein and India church leaders are considering options which also include the expansion of the medical ministry. On his return to the U.S., Pastor Enderlein will visit the Free Lutheran Church in Lisbon, Portugal.

Gilbert, Arizona — Calvary Lutheran held their first anniversary service in their newly rented facility on November 7. Pastor Paul Nash preached at the Velda Rose Center, 5646 E. Main, Mesa, Arizona. The congregation has rented a room in this Mesa strip mall. Snowbirds wintering in the greater Phoenix area are invited to call for more information: (480) 855-3612 or 854-0617. Pray for this congregation as they call a pastor.

Gene Finstrom of Buxton, North Dakota moved church furnishings from the recently closed Our Savior's Lutheran in Chillicothe, Illinois to the young Arizona church.

Loveland, Colorado — Lutheran Church of Hope held special meetings with Pastor John Kent of El Cajon, California. The October 24-27 meetings focused on the "Revisitation of the Reformation." Pastor Kent also had a session on the "Reformation of Youth Work." The congregation continues to meet in their rented facilities while waiting for the property they have purchased to be annexed by the city and then to gain approval of their building permit.



The annual Canadian Pastors and Laymens Retreat was held last September in Vernon, B.C. Pastors Paul Nash, Al Monson and James Rasmussen presented the "Miracle Mile Ministry." The area continues to reap the blessings from the retreat seminars. Pictured are the participants in the U.S. vs. Canadian basketball tournament played during the afternoon rest and recreation time.

Glens Falls, New York — Faith Lutheran Church held a retirement open house for their Pastor Dan Uzupan on October 31. Pray for this home mission congregation as they seek to call a pastor.

Palmdale, California — Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran is seeking the Lord's guidance in establishing a relationship with a group of Hispanic believers in their community. Pastor Christian Andrews is the bilingual pastor of this home mission congregation.

Redfield, South Dakota — A fellowship group has been meeting each Sunday evening since the end of September in this north central South Dakota community. Pastor Mark Olson of Arlington, South Dakota has coordinated the meetings currently being held in the basement of Leo's Cafe in downtown Redfield. Part of a group seeking fellowship and the Lord's direction, Ron and June Ohm first learned about the AFLC after driving in Sioux Falls where they noticed a Free Lutheran church sign. (Abiding Savior is the AFLC congregation in Sioux Falls.) Upon returning home to Redfield, they looked on the internet at www.aflc.org and e-mailed for more information. Home Missions Director Paul Nash began communicating with the Ohms and set up an informational meeting on September 21. Pray for this group as they seek God's will.



Pictured is the new look of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Pleasanton, Texas. The congregation has remodeled both the exterior and interior of the church building. Snowbirds are welcome to join them in worship when traveling south of San Antonio just off I-37. For more information call Pastor James Vineyard at 830-281-3009.

Special magazine issue planned

The March 14, 2000 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will be a unique issue, designed to be given away. The entire issue will be produced with the unchurched, non-Christian in mind. We are hoping that it will be something that can be given to a person with little familiarity with the Bible

Young mission congregation joins AFLC

Brooklyn Park, Minnesota — Word of God Lutheran Church has recently been added to the AFLC congregational roster. The congregation was formed in September 1998. They first met in the Minneapolis suburb of St. Louis Park, and were a member of the Lutheran Ministerium and Synod—USA. Last September, they began worshipping Sundays at 10:30 a.m. in a rented conference room at the Northwest Inn in Brooklyn Park.

The congregation's pastor is Rev. Jeffery A. Iverson, a 1997 graduate of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was recently placed on the AFLC Fellowship Clergy Roster. He and his wife, Jean have three young children. Pastor Iverson works full time in secular work to support his family while serving this young mission congregation. He recently wrote, "Our fellowship with the AFLC has already been a blessing. Our family greatly enjoyed our time at family camp at the ARC in August. The friendship and counsel of Pastors Robert Lee, Jim Rasmussen, Paul Nash and Chris Oswood has been invaluable. We look forward to a long and fruitful ministry of service to Christ in fellowship with the AFLC."

The congregation is in need of altarware, especially an altar cross. For more information contact Pastor Iverson at 612-560-4458; e-mail is jaiverson@juno.com or their web site at www.forministry.com/55429woglc.

There's no end to it

— by Chaplain Kerwin K. Sletto
Ottawa, Illinois

A mother had asked her son to pray, but the little boy said he did not know what to pray about. The mother advised him to thank God for all He had given him. Her son began: "Dear God, I thank You for my play horse and all my games, for my legs that I can use to run around with, so I do not have to use crutches as Carl does; for my good eyes, so I am not blind as poor Fritz; for my warm bed; for my mother and father; for the food and ...," he stopped.

Turning to his mother he said, "But, Mother, there is no end!" (Taken from *Altar Steps* by R.P. Haakonson.)

Indeed, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 92:1). There is no end to all His benefits to us!



Pastor Jeffrey and Jean Iverson.

It is so easy to complain about things we don't have or to whine about circumstances in our lives that we become consumed by it. We are an envious society and yet, if we will only stop and count our blessings, naming them one by one, we will see the loving, providing hand of God at work blessing us in untold ways.

No matter what test of faith may come our way, God is at work, seeking to bless us. God will never leave us nor forsake us. He causes all things to work together for good to those who are His children (Romans 8:28).

The key to a fulfilled life is to look for the blessings. They are always there if we but look for them and give thanks for them. My Grandpa Magnuson lived to the age of 95. He out-lived his wife and two of his four children. He couldn't see or hear well, yet he always seemed to have a positive outlook on life.

One day I asked him how he maintained such a positive attitude. His answer was that every day he looked for a blessing from God. It might be an unexpected letter or phone call. Sometimes an unexpected visitor stopped by to visit or came with dinner and ate with him. He told me that I was his blessing for that day because he hadn't expected to see me.

God never fails to bless us but sometimes we fail to look for the blessings. God calls upon us to "be anxious about nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Start each day by giving thanks to God for His blessings, then look for those little and significant ways God reminds you of His presence and providing hand. Your life will be changed.

Give this one away

and the things of the Lord, and they will see in it understandable articles of interest and a clear presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please be in prayer for us as we make plans for this issue, and be in prayer for who you might give a copy of this issue to. We are going to print extra copies of it and ask

congregations and individuals to let us know how many they would like to receive to distribute to others. When you know how many extra copies you would like, please let our secretary know at: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone 612-545-5631.

Stewardship update: things to pray for in the AFLC

During the past year, the AFLC Stewardship Board has sought to serve the AFLC by being informed of the needs in the various departments, by praying for those needs, and by presenting them to the people of the AFLC. Since the AFLC is our ministry, each of us, as Christian stewards, in a very real way, carries a responsibility for the work of each department.

The biggest need we are aware of at this time is in world missions. At the time of the all boards meeting last September, only 46% of the world missions budget had been received. That, in itself, is serious, but it is not the whole picture. The budget figure does not include the money currently needed to be received through designated giving, and it does not include designated giving shortfalls from previous years. Designated giving is that which is designated by donors for missionary and national worker unit support.

The budget itself for the current year is \$109,000, but the total picture, including the designated support needs, comes close to \$400,000. This total figure is not as well known, because only the budget figures come to the conference floor. The problem of the current budget shortfall has become extremely acute by the fact that unit support has fallen off, to the extent that one missionary's fund is \$35,000 in the red, and another is a negative \$24,000. These unit support shortages are being covered by budgeted funds, as per world missions policy, so that the missionaries are being paid, but this means a lack of funds for the expenses planned for in the budget.

It may appear that the needs in world missions are smaller this year than in previous years, because the budget request is smaller. But the reason it is down is that the phasing in of the unit support plan is now complete for all missionaries, so that now, those funds, even though they

Prayers and giving are also needed for other areas of the work as follows:

- Pray for more pastors. A total of 15 churches are now without pastors.
- Funds are needed for parish education to print the Bible study on Romans, and the third quarter teacher's manual of first grade Sunday school material. About \$5,000 is needed for each project.
- Pray for the planning and production of a special issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, intended to be used as a tool for personal evangelism.
- Funds are steadily coming in for married student housing on campus. About \$60,000 is still needed to complete it.
- Pray for a non-denominational ministry in Uganda, which has asked MATA (Pastor Mike Crowell) to set up aviation support for them.
- Uphold the home mission department in prayer as they seek to train pastors, fill vacancies and build homes. Pray for victory in the spiritual warfare that accompanies being on the front lines.
- Pray for AFLC Evangelist Jim Rasmussen and those who are serving as associate evangelists. Pray for the third annual evangelism rally, set for April 28-29.
- Pray for the FLY Leadership Conference next July 17-22, and the need for small group leaders. Pray for the youth ministry training team, now traveling to churches who request them.

are still needed, no longer appear in the budget. As a result, the world missions budget now has a smaller percentage of the total AFLC budget, and consequently receives a smaller percentage of funds received at headquarters not earmarked for a particular department. All of this has made for a critical situation in world missions. Unless something happens, the world missions committee is going to have to make some very difficult decisions about

the direction and size of our mission ministry.

The above list could certainly be longer, but we present these matters at this time for the exercise of our Christian stewardship in prayer and giving as the Lord leads. May we seek to be faithful to our Master in heaven, who is the owner and the giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift" (James 1:17).

— AFLC Stewardship Board

Ministry Training Institute in motion for fall 2000

Preparations continue for the AFLC Ministry Training Institute (MTI) slated to begin on the AFLBS campus in September 2000.

"It's exciting to be a part of a brand-new ministry," said Mark Johnson, secretary of the MTI Planning Committee. "It's a ministry



AFLBS dean of students Mark Johnson.

that will send more workers into the harvest and a ministry that will be a gift to the church."

Established as part of the Vision 2004 plan, MTI will prepare believers for work in ministry, youth work and the mission field. Geared for Bible school graduates, the third-year program will prepare students on campus during fall semester and send them out on internships during the spring.

The one year of study — costing \$5,500 to \$6,500 for tuition, room and board, travel, and missions stipend — will offer internships in several ministries:

- * Student missionaries in Campo Mourão, Brazil at the AFLC SEMEAR campus.

- * Cross-cultural training at an AFLC-affiliated mission station in Naknek and South Naknek, Alaska.

- * Youth ministry internship in a U.S. AFLC church under a seasoned youth ministry specialist.

- * Student pastor internship, working with an AFLC pastor, who

will train and equip the possible seminary candidates in congregational ministry.

- * Evangelism internship, working under AFLC Director of Evangelism Jim Rasmussen.

- * Missions networking in Eastern Europe, working under AFLC Pastor Don Richman.

"The call is still on — make disciples," said Pastor Rasmussen. "The fields are ripe unto harvest."

The planning committee, working under the AFLC School Board, consists of a seven-member board who have initiated the program. Members include Seminary Dean Dr. Fran Monseth, AFLBS Dean James L. Johnson, World Missions Director Gene Enderlein, Home Missions Director Paul Nash, Youth Ministries Director Kevin Olson, and AFLBS Dean of Students Mark Johnson.

Pastor James L. Johnson noted MTI's connection to the Vision 2004 program. "We want to make clear the Vision 2004 is not about buildings, bricks and mortar. It's about expanding the gospel and furthering God's ministry. We hope to see many more young people in the AFLC serving as youth pastors, missionaries and shepherds, doing the work of evangelism."

The board originally planned to begin the school last September. As August approached, however, the prayerful consensus was to wait one more year.

Not only does MTI hope to draw future pastors and leaders from among Bible school graduates, but the school hopes to see AFLC lay people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s apply as special students. Applicants without a two-year Bible school degree will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

MTI candidates or interested supporters should call AFLBS at 1-877-AFLBS, or write to: MTI, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Below is the 2000 *Lutheran Ambassador* schedule. Please be in prayer for each issue.

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***The Lutheran Ambassador* schedule 2000**

<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Editor's Deadline</u>	<u>To Printer</u>	<u>Special Emphasis</u>
January 4	December 3	December 10	Evangelism
February 1	December 31	January 7	Prayer
February 22	January 21	January 28	AFLC Schools
March 14	February 11	February 18	Outreach
April 4	March 3	March 10	Lent/Easter
April 25	March 24	March 31	Pre-Conference
May 16	April 1	April 28	Finances
June 6	May 13	May 19	Children/Youth
July 4	June 2	June 9	Beauty of Jesus
July 25	June 23	June 30	Conf. Review
August 29	July 14	July 21	Sunday School
September 19	August 18	August 25	AFLC defined
October 10	September 8	September 15	Missions/Hm/Wld.
October 31	September 29	October 6	Reformation
November 21	October 20	October 27	Thanks./Advent
December 12	November 10	November 17	Christmas

*Bold are the 24 page issues. Other issues are 16 pages.



From Vision 2004

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:4-7).

We at Vision 2004 want to once again express our thankfulness to each of you who have been so faithful in praying for and giving to this expansion project of our schools. We also praise the Lord that we now have our first building completed! The first seminary married housing unit is finished and is fully occupied as of November 1, 1999!

We are also thankful to God for what He is continuing to do. Prayerfully each of you have seen the floor layout for the new student center on your congregation's bulletin board. This is Phase II of Vision 2004 to be built as God supplies the necessary funds.

Continue to pray for this entire expansion endeavor:

- for those of us in leadership, that we would be sensitive to God's every direction;
- for those who we work with, for safety and that we might minister to them;
- for our churches as they pray for us and for what support they may be able to give;
- for yourselves as to what God may lay upon your heart to give.

Commitment Sunday is January 2, 2000, a day set aside for special prayer and cheerful giving to Vision 2004. The receipts and pledges of these next months will influence the decision on February 1 as to when the groundbreaking on the five million dollar student center for the Bible school will occur. Seventy-five percent of the cost must be met in cash and pledges before construction can begin. Above the cash already given and pledged, an additional \$60,000 is needed to complete payment on the initial seminary housing project and then funds will be directed for Phase II.

AFLBS Campus Days draw record number

On October 22-24, the Fall Campus Days at AFLBS saw 144 young people register. This is up from the normal 100 students. AFLBS alumnus Ben Monseth and Pastor Tim Carlson from Wheatland, Iowa were the guest speakers. Some of the guests joined current students in laying the sod at the new seminary housing unit on campus.

The Spring Campus Days is scheduled for April 28-30, 2000.

AAL offers internet access to members, all Lutherans

Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), a Fortune 500 organization based in Appleton, Wisconsin, is making the internet more accessible to its customers by creating a web portal and offering unlimited internet access. Working with U.S. Internet Inc., Minneapolis, AAL is offering the package to AAL members and all Lutherans for \$16.95 per month. Included in the package:

- * Free web content-screening software called Cybersnoop Lite;
- * Three e-mail accounts available through the web, making e-mail accessible wherever the consumer has internet access;
- * Support service always available;
- * A start-up CD-ROM with installation instructions.

For more information contact AAL at www.aal.org.

Missionaries Tim and Renata Hinrichs, Cesky Tesin, Czech Republic, began their second year of teaching in the nearby Bible school in Dzieglielow, Poland. Pastor Hinrichs also teaches a class at Ostrava University and conducts worship services in area churches.

Last September, AFLC Pastor Dave and Claire Rene Hinrichs spent two weeks in Ceska Tesin where they enjoyed meeting their new grandson, Peter, and seeing the ministry firsthand.



Pastor Louis Balderach with his wife Margaret and son Henry at his installation service at Faith Lutheran in Weslaco, Texas on October 17, 1999. AFLC President Robert Lee conducted the installation service. Pastor Balderach was recently added to the AFLC Fellowship Clergy Roster. He has already begun to meet the AFLC "winter Texans" returning to the south Texas border town of Weslaco, just east of McAllen. For more information call him at 956-968-2342.

Rev. Silas E. Erickson, 81, of Dayton, Ohio, a pastor in the former Lutheran Free Church, recently passed away. His funeral was October 28, 1999 at Calvary Lutheran in Golden Valley, Minnesota. Known for his singing, he began in ministry in 1944 in the rural Thief River Falls congregation called Satersdahl, now closed. Many from Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls continue their annual Christmas worship service in that church building, with its original candelabra and candlelight Christmas tree.



Missionaries Tim and Renata Hinrichs and Peter.



Pictured are Pastor Randy Nelson, Kay Satterwhite, Cora Lee Bishop and Lloyd Nelson at the dedication of Faith Lutheran's preschool on September 26, in El Campo, Texas. Pastor Nelson wrote, "I am encouraged by the congregation's commitment to support this not as a 'money-making enterprise' but as an opportunity to reach beyond the walls of our church building and minister to a real need in our community." There are six children registered and the congregation expects that number to increase by the first of the year. The present facilities can hold up to 20 children. Pray for the new ministry as they seek to share the love of Jesus with each of these little ones and their families. El Campo is located southwest of Houston on Highway 59.



The Youth Ministry Team: (L. to R.), Eddie Britz, Brenda Stilley and Jason Norlien. On October 16, this team began the first leg of their training tour. By the end of November, they will have worked with AFLC congregations in Plymouth, Minnesota; Omaha and Deshler, Nebraska; Parker, Colorado; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Radcliffe, Iowa; Pipestone, Minnesota; Webster, South Dakota; and Dickinson, North Dakota. There are still dates from the end of November into the new year that have not been scheduled. Some churches have requested the team to come to their church for one day, others for the full week. Youth Ministries Director Kevin Olson said, "We would like to help you in whatever way would be easiest for your situation. These are three very mature, experienced youth leaders. Don't miss this opportunity to expand the vision of your ministry to your youth."

Address changes

Lay Pastor Mark Skogerboe, serving Faith Lutheran in Colfax, Wisconsin is living at 209 Viking Dr., Colfax, WI 54700; phone 715-962-2533.

Pastor James Olson is living at 3115-H 23rd Ave. SW, Fargo, ND 58103; phone 701-280-9080.

Pastor LeRoy Flickinger is living at 1008 Elizabeth Ave. N., Thief River Falls, MN 56701.

Pastor Phil Haugen, AFLC Schools' faculty member, is living at 3232 Yates Ave. N., Crystal, MN 55422; phone 612-531-0875.

Pastor Todd Klemme, serving Minnewaska Lutheran in Starbuck, Minnesota, is living at P.O. Box 775, 105 E. 3rd St., Starbuck, MN 56381; phone 320-239-4432.

Pastor Frank Cherney, serving St. John's Lutheran in Duluth, Minnesota was installed as their pastor on November 7, by AFLC President Robert Lee. The Cherneys live at 715 W. 6th St., Duluth, MN 55806; phone 218-720-4737.

Pastor Clyde Grier is living at P.O. Box 3513, 1235 E. Elm #102, Springfield, MO 65802; phone 417-865-7274.

Pastor Louis Balderach, serving Faith Lutheran in Weslaco, Texas, is living at 908 W. 3rd St., Weslaco, TX 78596; phone 956-968-2376 (h), 968-2342 (o).

Dickinson, North Dakota — Pastor Noel Vold began his new ministry at Our Savior's Lutheran the end of October, 1999. Rev. Vold previously served Hope Lutheran (ELCA), in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He was recently placed on the AFLC Fellowship Clergy Roster.

Pastor Tim Hurley, Ponca City, Oklahoma has resigned as the pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. He is seeking employment in academia. His new address is 38 Midway Manor, Opelika, AL 36801; phone 334-745-6932.

Sunburg, Minnesota — Sunburg Free Lutheran Church hosted special meetings with Pastor Dennis Gray of Grafton, North Dakota. The October 3-6 meetings focused on the book of Romans. Pastor Gray served as a student pastor at Sunburg. Pastor Carl Hort serves the Sunburg congregation.

AFLC Memorial Gifts

department given to —
in memory of —

World Missions

Roberta Gartley
Ruth Rust
Hazelle Hesby
Harvey Hendrickson
Sylvia Hanson
John Horn
Frank Oien

Vision 2004

Clayton Berg
Frank Oien

Home Missions

Ernest Thompson
Hjalmer Anderson
Frank Oien
Harvey Hendrickson

AFLBS

Clayton Berg
Rev. Ernest Langness
John Horn
Frank Oien

Cameron Badurek

Hazelle Hesby

Albert Efsken

Everett Gibson

AFLTS

Luther Halmrast

John Horn

Dora Wilson

Gunnar Soderman

Rose Bach

Hazelle Hesby

H.I.S. Fund

Dora Wilson

Parish Education

Inger Ohnstad

Evangelism

Dora Wilson

All Funds

Bernard Nelson

Arthur Hill

Eino Lahti



Over 200 members and friends celebrated the 90th anniversary of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church on September 19, 1999, in rural Beresford, South Dakota. AFLC President Robert Lee spoke during the morning worship service. He used Joshua 4 for his message on "Centennial Stones." He included the story of Lars Skrefsrud, a Norwegian missionary to the Santal Mission, for whom the church was named. The afternoon program featured numerous greetings and memories shared. Throughout the day the church's mission statement was remembered: "A beacon on the hill standing firm on the Word of God so that all would know Jesus."

Bagley, Minnesota — Rice and Alida Lutheran Parish is being served by interim pastor Ron Pulcher, formerly of Bemidji, Minnesota.

Springfield, Missouri — The South Central District pastors held their annual meeting on November 1-2 at Immanuel Lutheran. Home Missions Director Paul Nash met with them.

Parish Education update

We are grateful for gifts received towards the printing of the Romans Bible study totaling \$2,100 as of October 26. Approximately \$3,300 is still needed for this project. Gifts can be sent to Parish Education specifically designated for "Romans."

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (10 months) — January 1 - October 31, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$14,448.76	200,958.69	86
Seminary	110,296.00	13,431.29	103,915.42	94
Bible School	147,674.00	8,376.99	121,582.51	82
Home Missions.	238,152.00	16,003.01	170,200.45	71
World Missions.	190,909.00	10,331.17	118,927.53	62
Capital Investment . .	14,065.00	1,458.40	6,196.59	44
Parish Education . . .	56,854.00	7,653.41	54,545.15	96
Church Extension . . .	21,051.00	440.17	15,917.01	76
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	72,143.20	792,243.35	78
TOTALS 1997	1,278,758.00	109,148.74	972,121.31	76
Goal 83%				

The Evangelism department received \$5,214.80 in October.

Thankful for the Reformation

Many are giving thanks for an agreement that has been reached between the Roman Catholic Church and various Lutheran groups throughout the world, including the largest Lutheran church body in America: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The agreement is called, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." The leader of the ELCA, Rev. H. George Anderson says, "Our two churches have bridged a theological divide that has separated us for nearly 500 years." An editorial in *The Oregonian* newspaper was also joyful about the declaration saying, "It's a big deal for all people of good will, ... Religious strife has fostered so much of human history's bigotry and violence that any easing of such strife is a welcome portent for the new millennium."

I certainly do not enjoy strife, and yet I am not giving thanks for the agreement. I am still thankful for the Protestant Reformation. I am glad Martin Luther spoke out about what was wrong in the Catholic Church. I give thanks that he had the courage to declare boldly that no other doctrine is more important than "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

It appears some are thankful for unity, no matter the price that must be paid to achieve it. I am also thankful whenever Christian people are working together in unity. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NIV). Unity is something we should strive after, but we do so remembering that for real unity to exist it must be based on truth. As Luther said in regards to justification by faith, "Where this single article remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit."

The stance that some appear to take is that the past nearly 500 years since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation has all been a big misunderstanding. They seem to act as if Luther got all worked up over nothing. One Catholic professor of theology said, "If in Luther's time you had had a comparable willingness to listen and hear what the other side was saying, it's quite possible the break would not have been so severe." All this trouble, for all these years, and the problem has simply been we have not done a good job of communicating with each other?!

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession states, "In this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity

is involved; when it is properly understood, it illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation that they need." In another part of the Lutheran Confessions, the Smalcald Articles, the article dealing with Christ and faith declares, "Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. ... On this article rests all that we teach and practice."

Luther was a reluctant reformer. He spoke up against what was going on in the church only after much prayer, much wrestling with His conscience and much leading and convicting from God. He did not see the issues as involving minor matters, but eternal matters. He did not fail to listen or communicate well. Instead he failed to see how he could do anything but stand on the truths of "grace alone, faith alone, the Word alone."

It seems some in the Lutheran church are almost sorry for "all the trouble" Luther caused. That is tragic. We should give thanks for how God used Luther, for the truth he declared, for the lives he has impacted over these last nearly 500 years, for the example he is for us.

Some are almost treating Luther like an older relative who doesn't quite have use of all of his senses. At large family gatherings they think it would be a little more peaceful if he stayed in his room and kept quiet.

Let us not treat Luther and his writings that way. Let us instead see him as a relative who is worthy of a prominent spot at the table; a relative

to whom we should listen and learn from. Let us not be ashamed of our heritage and of those who began the Protestant Reformation. Let us give thanks for what they did and the legacy they have left us.

As I've recently returned to my hometown, I've been reminded again of what a privilege it is to have a good heritage. I'm giving thanks this Thanksgiving for parents who were well thought of and respected by many. I'm blessed today because of the lives they lived.

I'm giving thanks too for "the parents" of the Lutheran church — those who had the courage to point out what was wrong and point to the truth. They took stands that were unpopular, costly and dangerous. They were convinced, however, that truth matters, and standing on truth is worth the sacrifice. May we give thanks for their example and follow in their footsteps.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"We should
give thanks
for how God
used Luther,
for the
truth he
declared ..."**

Freedom from the past — freedom for the future

Philippians 3:12-14 says, Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



sion, we see that it was all of a sudden. That is the idea here as well.

As we continue pressing on, all of a sudden we will capture the prize. We do not know when that will be. It is not that the goal is moving. The goal is stationary, it is secure, it is eternal life, but none of us knows at what time we will capture it. Therefore, we press on.

God's Word does not simply tell us to press on without offering any encouragement on how this is done. Paul goes on to write that he forgets what lies behind, and reaches forward to what lies ahead. It seems to me that in those words Paul shares with us the freedom he has in Christ.

First

He has the freedom to forget the things that lie behind him; his sin and guilt, and his life as a Pharisee. Paul could have easily argued that

he was not a good candidate to share the gospel because of what he had done. Yet, he states that he forgets those things that are in his past.

Jesus has also removed our sins from us, as far as the east is from the west. He has removed our guilt. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Through His death and resurrection we are free from our past sinfulness. We are made alive in Him, by His grace.

Second

He reaches for the future. Paul could have felt that his situation was just getting worse and worse. He is writing this letter to the Philippians while imprisoned. Yet, he doesn't focus on the bad things that might happen to him. Instead he says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Therefore, no matter what circumstances the future held for Paul, he knew that Jesus was in control of it all. We too, who believe in Christ, have the freedom to reach toward the future without fear.

In this final article of the year for me, it is my hope and prayer that this holiday season, and for many years to come, we would press on in Christ. We do so by His grace, until that day when we, all of a sudden, will capture that glorious prize!

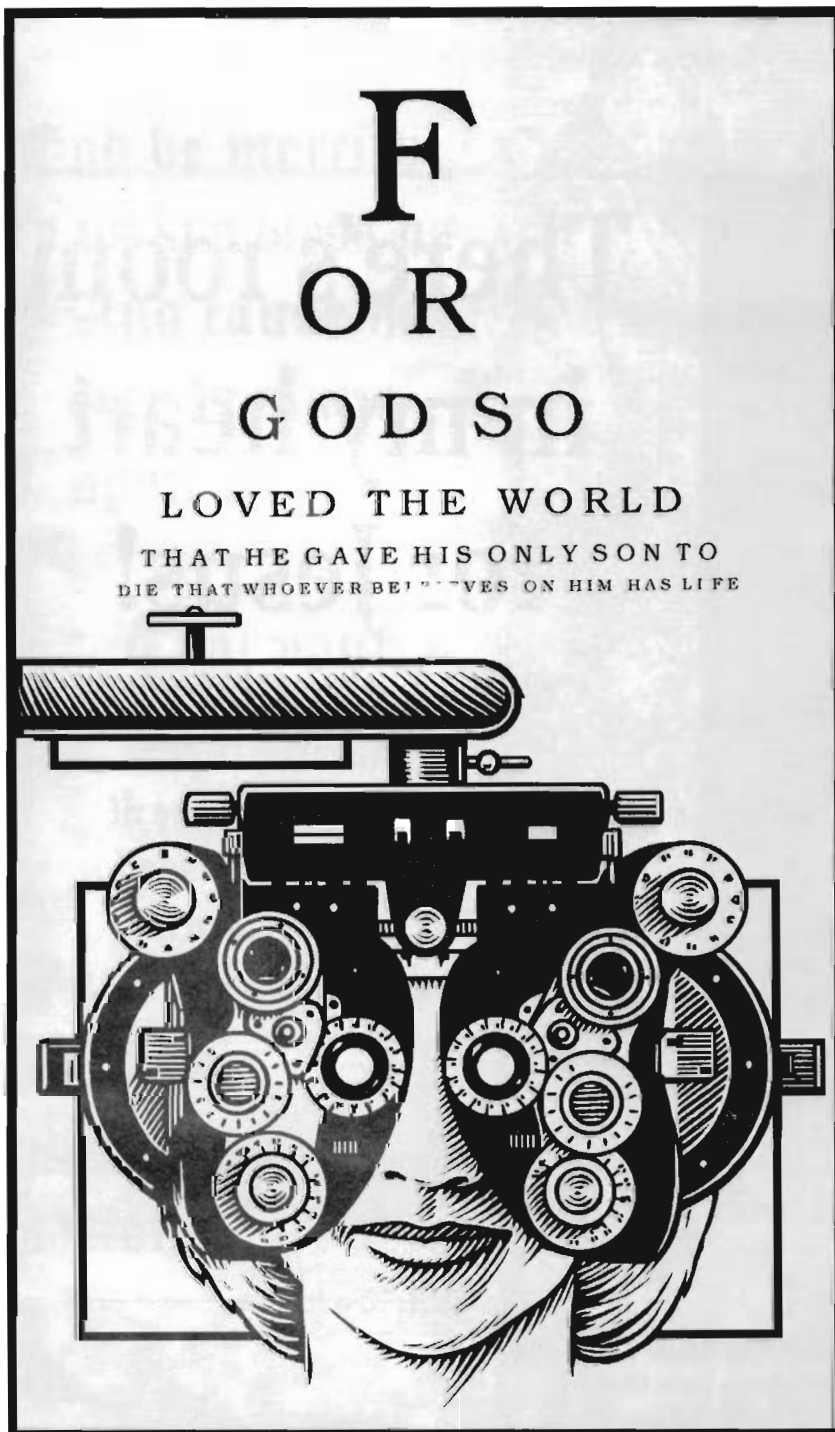


— Jon Dryburgh
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota

For many people today, Thanksgiving is the beginning of a marathon. A marathon that will run from now until after the New Year. The goal is to survive, physically, emotionally, and financially. If one begins the race too quickly, they experience burnout before Christmas even arrives. If one begins too slowly, they are forced to stay up late at night trying to get everything ready at the last minute, leaving no time to celebrate the birth of Christ. The key to the holiday race is to press on at a steady pace.

This is also true spiritually. The prize or goal for us spiritually is eternal life in heaven with Jesus. When Paul says that he is pressing on to lay hold of that for which he was also laid hold of, the phrase "lay hold of" means "to capture." What Paul is saying is that he will one day capture eternal life, in the same way that he was captured by Jesus Christ. If we look at Paul's conver-

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