

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

November 25, 1997

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# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 25, 1997  
Volume 35, Number 15



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

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### The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413)

is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

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#### For subscription changes and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631.

#### Subscriptions rates:

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

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

\$18.00 a year, International

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

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

## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...

for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; **as it is written**, "The righteous man shall live by his faith."  
— Romans 1:16-17

**T**he very heart of the gospel is the Christian's righteous standing before God. It ought to be proclaimed with great boldness and unceasing energy. Such confidence comes from the fact that God's Word stands. It is eternal and unchanging truth.

In the last few years we have seen intense attacks upon the inerrancy and authority of God's Word. Long standing doctrines have been dug up by their roots. The tragedy of such undermining of the truth is the lack of confidence it breeds regarding our righteousness in Christ. The sinner must be able to take God's Word as it stands, as it is written. Without this there is no assurance of God's favor or our salvation. The evil one knows that without confidence in the written Word, there is no confidence in Christ or the gospel.

Many Christians find that faith can be weak when temptation and difficulty arises. Things in our lives that were always constant and enduring suddenly begin to change. Satan accuses us mercilessly and our faith begins to buckle. Even more so is this true when faith has no solid foundation in Scripture on which to stand.

Note Paul's statement in these few words: *as it is written*. At it is written! The Word of God stands! What God has said at any time in the past is still valid today and stands to eternity. No other words have anything like this kind of certainty. Everything else is a mist or shadow by comparison.

God has said He will reckon

the atoning work of Jesus on the cross as righteousness to all who believe. Do you ever doubt that your sins are really forgiven or that God truly lives in you? Perhaps you look back at some special experience in your life either recent or long past. Then God seemed so near you could feel Him. But then at times you wonder if it was real. Others have had such experiences and still not reach eternity. Perhaps you think of the energy and effort you put into living for Christ. Sometimes you experience great success. But then you see how far you still have to go. The flesh is so strong, stronger than it ought to be if Christ really lived in your heart.

Notice these words: **IT IS WRITTEN**. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word stands forever. Nothing can change God's promise to you that Jesus' blood covers all your sins; that he who has the Son, has life.

In the end, there is only one reason to hope in forgiveness and eternal life: God has promised. He has said that he who believes in Jesus will be saved. What rest! What joy! What glory! God has promised. It is enough.



— Pastor Steve Mundfrom  
Bethany Lutheran  
Sebekka, Minnesota

## sound bites

**1** "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. 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

**"The fellowship of God is delightful beyond all telling. He communes with His redeemed ones in an easy, uninhibited fellowship that is restful and healing to the soul. ...**

**4** **What He is today we shall find Him tomorrow and the next day and the next year. ... He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than galaxies of new created worlds."**

— A. W. Tozer

**6**

"I am not to think of whether I shall be ready to meet Jesus tomorrow. I must make ready to meet Him today."

— O. Hallesby

**2** **"Jesus was a man of such joy, such merriment, such gladness of Spirit, such freedom and openness, that He was irresistible."**

— Sherwood Eliot Wirt

**3** "Now, I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, ... to listen to ye pastor, and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings."

— William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony, 1623

"God may choose this very day to intervene and take you Home — either by death or by Rapture. We can speculate, we can dread, we can dream — **5** but we do not know."

— Charles Swindoll

# How can we say thanks?

— June Engstrom

**G**eorge Washington, in first proclaiming a national holiday called *Thanksgiving*, gave thanks to the great Lord and ruler of nations. For more than a century, Americans recalled the first Thanksgiving celebrated by the Pilgrims, whose purpose for their Mayflower voyage was the advancement of the Christian faith.

Increasingly, Americans have secularized and trivialized Thanksgiving! Now many public school history classes totally omit Thanksgiving's religious origins. We learn from the Pilgrims that religious freedom is the root from which all freedoms grow. Their desire was to shape an entire culture on scriptural principles, according to D. James Kennedy in his book, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

Being thankful for our Christian heritage is important to Americans! Indeed, how can we say thanks for such a gift from God?

When Jesus enters the heart and life, we join with Peter and John in Acts 4:20, "We cannot help but speak about what we've seen and heard from Jesus!" Christ Jesus has changed every aspect of human life on earth.

Charles Spurgeon was converted in a small country church where he sought shelter in a snowstorm. God opened his

heart to the salvation message. He said: "On my way home, I felt every snowflake told me of the pardon I'd found, for I was white as the driven snow, through the grace of God! No words can further express the joy in that thanksgiving!" He went on to become a great English preacher who changed the face of Christianity.

Amy Carmichael's heart was touched in Keswick, England in 1886. She said she became dead to the world and its applause. Her God-given zeal for winning souls led her to spend the next 56 years as a missionary in India. It is thrilling to see what God can and does do!

How can we say thanks? Only with God's help. It's His grace and forgiveness freely given to all who call upon Him!

Even in difficult times, our 14-year-old granddaughter learned an important lesson. She went with her Sunday school class to the once thriving community of Jarrell, Texas after tornadoes had stripped the earth clean. She marveled and thanked God that lives were not lost, and experienced the joy of working together with God (cf. I Corinthians 3:9) in helping the stricken families.

What a great God we have!

(The author and her husband Harry, are rice farmers near Garwood, Texas. They have three children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They are members of Faith Lutheran in nearby El Campo.)



**L**eukemia! Your son has leukemia! We heard this diagnosis in December 1994. It was not what we wanted to hear, especially when it concerned our son who had just turned 13.

What? It can't be! How did this happen? We love God. We go to church. We give and we try to live our lives morally. Our minds ran wild with pain and frustration. This isn't right. It's not fair ... God are you there? Do You care?

"Trust Me. I care," God answered.

But really, how are we to give thanks for this?

Again He answered, "You can give thanks for Who I Am. You can give me the sacrifice of praise as Hebrews 13:15 tells you."

We prayed: "God, we know that You did not put this on him. We know that You are the same yesterday, today and forever, but we are afraid. Our son is diagnosed with a serious illness. We can hardly put one foot in front of the other. Everything seems so heavy."

"Remember Deuteronomy 31:6,8: 'Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. ... He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.' And II Timothy 1:7, 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.'"

As we searched the Scriptures more, we found a very interesting verse in Romans 4:17, "As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

God called Abraham the father of many nations before Abraham had a son. In deciding to follow God's example, we called our son healed before there was any manifestation of it. God helped our family to speak wellness, not sickness. He taught us to use His Word as a weapon. Ephesians 6:17 calls the Word of God the sword of the Spirit. Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

In January of 1995, chemo threat-

## In tough times

— Wendell and Judy Berg

*Be anxious for 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, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—*

*Philippians 4:6,7*

*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*— I Thessalonians 5:18*

ments were started. As the year progressed, we thanked Him for family that supported us in so many ways. We thanked Him for our church family that stood with us and believed with us that God was able. We thanked God for the outpouring of love the area communities poured upon us. We praised God for the understanding and help at the school. We thanked God for the wisdom he gave us concerning good nutrition.

There were times when discouragement wanted to settle in and God would send something or someone to encourage us.

Have we been blessed? Yes!

Have we seen prayers answered? Yes!

Do we give the sacrifice of praise in all circumstances? Oh, how we wish that were true.

We would do well to remember that we can always thank God for Who He is. Psalm 107:1 states it well, "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."



*(The authors have two teenage sons and live near Hillsboro, North Dakota. Their family is active at Valley Free Lutheran in Portland, ND.)*

# NEW AND EXCITING?

— Helen Amland Omodt

**M** My friend Doris was putting bananas in her shopping cart when I saw her in the produce department of my favorite store.

"Hi, wht's new and exciting for you and Bob?" she bubbled.

Surprised to see her, I replied, "Oh, not much. Pretty normal."

Doris smiled and then said, "Sometimes that's not all bad." Doris' casual conversations have a way of becoming thought-provoking.

**New and exciting!** I've had some wonderful times including graduations, class reunions, first job, my wedding, our son's birth, visits from my uncle and cousins from Norway, and quite extensive travel. I am thankful for each of these joyous mountaintop experiences.

But new and exciting could also mean not-so-good valley experiences. I know about those too — mainly related to family health problems and especially my husband's heart surgery. God's provision there is an article in itself! I am thankful for His loving care and amazing answers to prayer.

**Pretty normal!** Normal doesn't mean dull, boring or completely stress-free. Each day is a little different and has its own surprises which make life interesting, new and exciting. This is normal, regular living on level ground as opposed to living on the mountain top or in the valley. The Lord knows we need this much of the time.

**Sometimes that's not all bad!** Doris's words again. Of course, normal isn't all bad. It's good! How I've appreciated settling down to normal days after both the joyous and the difficult times. Doris was right.

Most of us find it easier to be thankful

for great times. We may try to be thankful in difficult times. But can we give thanks and maintain an attitude of thanksgiving on ordinary days? Yes. The Bible tells us to be thankful in Psalm 100:4 and many other verses. But how do we do this?

*Being thankful is a choice.* I like to reflect first on some of the many blessings I have:

Jesus is my Savior and He's so good to me.

A fine, loving husband.

Waking up and getting up to a new day, a day the Lord has made (Psalm 118:24), and work to do.

The privilege of prayer.

Family and friends, especially those who pray for me, help and encourage me.

God's mercy and grace new every morning.

St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Pastor Brian and Margaret Pearson.

The Bible and God's many rich promises there.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

God is present and in control as He cares for us.

God's beauty in nature.

Daily little surprises.

Chocolate chip cookies ... and so much more!

Then I look at the blessings of what I **don't** have on a normal day and what is not taking place:

Persecution for worshipping God.

Huge snow drifts or ice storms.

A car that won't start or a car accident.

Electric power outage.

A cooking disaster.

A visit to the emergency room — and the list could go on and on.







I choose to be thankful. God is good and deserves my thanks. I may not always feel like it, but I know God can transform my heart and give me this everyday thankful attitude and confidence in Him.

It's helpful to begin the normal day with prayer, praising and thanking God. The day goes better too. I also find many of the hymns are helpful. What a great heritage we have in them! Singing them is best, of course, but reading the words is also good.

True thankfulness can show in a cheerful smile, rejoicing and being glad. I'm working on that.

Choosing an attitude of thanksgiving to God will overflow to people too. A sincere word of thanks and appreciation doesn't take much effort but warms the heart of the receiver; so would a card, a note or a phone call. These are opportunities to help or encourage others. This is important and may even be urgent as we think of others instead of ourselves.

Maintaining an attitude of thankfulness is a choice. Each day I choose to look for and be thankful for the smaller things in life and not to dwell too much on what I cannot accomplish or change. I know God has promised to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19). Often He gives us far above that. He is faithful (Hebrews 10:23) and I am blessed. Yes, I do thank God for the normal, new and exciting days!



*(The author and her husband, Robert, live in Aurora, Illinois. They have one son and are long-time members of St. Olaf Lutheran Church in nearby Montgomery.)*



**Jillellamudi, India** — Pictured is Pastor Dyvanaram and a young helper wading through flood waters to carry food to the congregation members. After four days of flooding this past September from the worst cyclonic storm in two decades, 70 families in the BFLC congregation along with the whole village suffered devastating damage. The AFLC is involved in missions outreach in the State of Andhra Pradesh in the east coast of India. The AFLC World Missions Committee released emergency funds to help with some of the needs in that area.

The World Relief Commission has matched the AFLC's \$5,000 crisis relief and will be personally given by Pastor Enderlein to the three congregations affected by this recent flood. The AFLC World Missions Committee has an "in-out" Relief Account just for such needs. Congregations and individuals contribute to that account regularly or with a one-time gift.



In spite of the flood, the BFLC's free medical camp set up at Ananda Raopeta for their monthly visit.

**AFLC President Robert Lee and Missionary Connely Dyrud**, traveled to Portugal during November 12-19, to visit with groups interested in fellowship with the AFLC.

**World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein**, spent three weeks during November, traveling to the AFLC mission stations in India. Plans to visit interested groups in Mozambique are delayed until later in 1998. Pray for God's wisdom as the AFLC looks at possible mission work in Portugal and Africa.

# I am not afraid

**T**he year two thousand is nearly upon us. Will the world be a better or a worse place to live? Many people shake their heads with frustration as they observe the moral decline of our day. They wonder what the future has in store. Some fear simply because they have no control over the future. Still, others give it no thought as they have an out-of-mind and out-of-sight way of viewing the future. Though I have been known to shake my head with frustration as I see the moral decline of our day, I do not fear the next millennium.



— Pastor Tim Johnson  
Resurrection Free Lutheran  
Beltrami, Minnesota

## Let me explain.

The first words that man addressed specifically to God are found in Genesis 3:10, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." Clearly, Adam feared the future. Why? Because he had disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. He no longer had a right relationship with his Creator and Master. He tried to hide from God, but "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Each of us are as though naked before God. Every person will face Him one day and give an account of his or her life.

If this were the end of the story, we would all have great reason to fear the future. Unfortunately, this is the end of the story for some. However, the story continues for me and hopefully it continues for you.

The last words that man addressed specifically to God are found in Revelation 22:20, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." What a difference between the first words spoken to God and the last ones! From fear and hiding to welcome.

## Keeping a balance

**A**s the year 2000 approaches, the flow of predictions about the end threatens to become a flood. "Every futurist from Nostradamus to Edgar Cayce to the architects of the pyramids ... has targeted the year 2000 for the end of the world," warns a TV series on ancient prophecies. At the check-out stand the tabloids regularly sport headlines about coming destruction.

The approaching transition to a new millennium is generating renewed interest in the end times



— Pastor Jim Johnson  
Solid Rock Free Lutheran  
Osseo, Minnesota

## Millennial

among Christians as well. Many popular Christian writers have churned out novels about Christ's return. Others have new non-fiction titles out on the subject. Consider, for example, *The End: Why Jesus Could Return in AD 2000*, or *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*.

Reading descriptions of Bible prophecy can be scary. Look at these words from an evangelical Bible teacher not known for sensationalism: "The world will begin to come apart at the seams — worse than any ecologists nightmare. ... Stars will fall and planets will run off course, causing chaotic changes in climate. ... Great famines will cause millions to perish. ... Strange new epidemics will sweep the world, killing millions in spite of all that modern medicine can do."

How are we to respond? Should Christian families forego having more children so the kids will not have to experience such terrible events? Should any Christian bother to be involved in the political system, since the world is going to be destroyed so soon? Should we even bother to plant a tree? What good will it do if Jesus is going to come back tomorrow? Are some tempted to get caught up in the world's fatalistic attitude: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die?" How can we strike a balance?



The cross made the difference! Jesus gave Himself as the perfect substitute and sacrifice for all sins. All who place their trust in Him, His death and resurrection, are forgiven for their sins and justified (just as if they have never sinned). I have personally received all of this and more. So when Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming quickly," I can say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

Before Jesus returns, Scripture tells us there will be false Christ's, wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes. Christians will be hated and killed, lawlessness will increase and most people's love will grow cold, while the gospel will be preached in the whole world (Matthew 24:5-14). These events are taking place. We are in the end times and things happen very quickly these days. For some this is a scary thought, but it doesn't have to be.

When you have received Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, you have His promises to cling to. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." When you are in Christ, Satan cannot have you, even if you are taken into custody for being a Christian. Jesus promised, "It

shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak" (Matthew 10:19).

What is the worst thing that someone can do to you in this world? Kill you? Without meaning to be trite about death, what does the Apostle Paul say regarding the death of a Christian? "Death is swallowed up in victory!" Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28). In Romans 8, Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" As God inspired him, Paul answers his own question, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

Those of you in Christ, what do you have to fear in the future? Has not Christ said, "I will be with you always" and "I will never leave you nor forsake you"? Has He ever been unfaithful? Quite the contrary, He gave His very life for you. Christ is committed to you. As you look at the future, join with me in the words of that familiar Psalm:

***"I fear no evil; for Thou art with me."***



## *predictions*

### **PERSPECTIVE**

Certainly we need to ask God to give us His perspective. Does the year 2000 have any special significance in His timetable? Ours is not the only calendar in existence. For example, our year 2000, on the Jewish calendar, is the year 5761. Our dating system was developed about AD 500. Scholars agree it is probably off by three to six years. So if 200 years after Christ's birth is significant it probably is really 1997! Jesus said very clearly, "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matthew 24:36). The image of a thief is used often in Scripture to picture the Second Coming. To attach significance to the fact that our calendars are turning to the year 2000 is questionable.

### **STUDY**

It's not that we should be uninterested in eschatology. Jesus calls us to "be always on the watch" (Luke 21:36). So, in a sense, renewed interest in the end is a positive thing, for whatever reason. But we need to make sure we satisfy our interest by going to the Bible. It is the Word of God we are to study, not the tabloids. Christian novels can be interesting, and books of Bible prophecy can be helpful. But we always need to check human writing with the Scriptures. The Bible is our authority.

### **CAUTION**

Another way we can get knocked off balance is by getting dogmatic about details. More than one Christian ministry has been discredited lately by date setting. How many were disillusioned when those dates passed without Christ's return? Attempts to identify the Antichrist have also hurt the cause of Christ. Those who said Adolph Hitler or Henry Kissinger were the Antichrist missed the mark. But the predictions continue. If you doubt it you can hunt down the Web Page titled, "Proof Bill Gates is the Antichrist."

### **WHAT IS SURE**

We ought to be focused on what we *know* about the end and can agree on. Jesus is coming back — visibly, to reign as King (Matthew 24:27). When the New Testament speaks of this Second Coming it is usually in contexts with a strong emphasis on our behavior. For example, the phrase in Luke 12:35, "be dressed in readiness," implies that we are ready to go, not tied down to things in this world. It literally pictures the outer robe being tucked in to the belt so it wouldn't get tangled. We need to be careful our lives aren't so tangled in status and possessions that we stumble and fall before His return. It also implies that we are doing the work God has called us to do. They tucked in their robe in order to be able to better serve the Master. The point is not to lay out a chart of future events, but to call us to live Jesus' way right now.



# God's Mission and ours

— Dr. Norvald Yri  
Haydom Lutheran Hospital  
PO Box Mbulu  
Arusha, Tanzania, East Africa

**H**er name was Grace. She was around 20 years-old, and a high school student in Tanzania, East Africa. It was a Saturday evening at the Lutheran Theological College where I was a missionary pastor and a professor of New Testament.

Grace was staying with her uncle, who also was a professor at the same school where the pastors of the Lutheran Church are being trained together with students from many other nations. The revival of East Africa had reached many of our 250 theological students at Makumira, located between Arusha and Mt. Kilimanjaro. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania had opened up for the revival leading so many baptized people to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

But this Saturday evening's service was different! The Holy Spirit through God's Word made such an impact upon all of us. It was difficult to even leave the church. Many had been asking for prayer. Some prayed for demon-possessed family members, another for a sick one, another for young people newly married. Some asked for prayer as they prepared to go out into the mountains for evangelism the next day. Several stood and gave their fresh and spontaneous testimonies about their Lord and Savior. Some wept because of conviction of sin, and asked for forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ.

As we sang, we walked out of the church into the starlit evening. All greeted one another with the sign of love and concern before quietly returning to their dormitories.

However, Grace remained and just stood there.

Jesus was so near. She wanted to say something. "I want to praise Jesus because He saved me," she finally said. We who were there with her felt a deep love for Jesus coming from her heart.

A few days later, Grace was with the Lord in heaven! She had been on her way from Arusha to her home, a Masai family near the border of Kenya. The driver of the car she was riding in was drunk and unable to control it. Grace was killed. Some time later when we came to the home of Grace, we met her mother who said: "She is not here. She went to be with the Lord."

Winning souls for heaven. That is our mission! We have been called to tell God's gospel (Romans 1:1ff). It is the gospel about Jesus. We still have time. Doors are open, but we do not know for how long.

Pray for your missionaries in different countries. Pray for your pastors and leaders. Pray for the new visions about mission outreach. Pray also, if God reminds you, for my wife Anna and me as we return to Tanzania (from Norway) in November this year. We plan to work there until June 1998. Anna will be teaching at the nurse's training college at Haydom Lutheran Hospital in Tanzania and I have been asked to preach and teach in the different congregations. The door is wide open. The church will reach further out to the unreached. We want to help them.

The AFLC has a God-given responsibility for the gospel in the States and in many other parts of the world. I sense that God is calling the Association, as there is revival among the young people. But a revival is also dangerous, if the Lord is not given room in the hearts, mind and life. Are you ready for His coming? Are you prepared to meet your God?

Pray that the revival will lead to personal faith and that we will more clearly see the lost and be willing to reach them with the Good News about Christ.

It begins in my heart and mind. It continues in my family, in my congregation. I see those around me. Yes, they started in Jerusalem.



**Dr. Norvald Yri and his wife Anna.** Dr. Yri is holding a copy of the newly published Bibelforlaget. He was the main translator of this Bible in Norwegian according to the text and pattern of the New King James Version. To order a copy, write to Box 83, 2013 Sjetten, Norway, or contact Dr. Yri at Fjellhaug Mission Seminary, Sinselveien 15, 1572 Oslo, Norway. Dr. and Mrs. Yri spent six weeks studying at the AFLC schools this fall before going on to Tanzania. Dr. Yri has lectured in Europe, Africa and Asia. Along with his position at the Fjellhaug Mission Seminary in Oslo, he has written for numerous Christian papers.



## Matching fund gift given for Wilderness Camp building project

**Lake Park, Minnesota** — The Wilderness Bible Camp is located on an AFLC-owned 70-acre tract of land south of Lake Park in central Minnesota. Donated years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Dahlgren to be a Bible camp, this mostly wooded land has been developed for that purpose. Each summer, a week of camp is held, ending on the third Sunday of July. Most of those attending have RV or camper units. Others have stayed at nearby resorts.

Located on the campground are: a mobile home for the caretakers, an outdoor meeting shelter, a modern bath house, and a maintenance building. For years the camp board has prayed for the day when a building might be constructed for indoor meetings and lodging for people who do not have campers. That day is fast approaching.

Recently, a matching fund gift up to \$25,000 has been offered to the Bible camp to provide an indoor worship center at the camp. The board has prayed and planned, and believes that if funds can be raised, a building can be enclosed by camp time next summer. If you would like to contribute toward this project, a check for "AFLC Wilderness Bible Camp" can be sent to the camp treasurer, Mr. Don Olson, 2825 N. 9 1/2 Street, Fargo, ND 58102.

## OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

### Obedience

**T**his is a story about a horse. A potential champion. During a recent trip to Texas I visited with his owner and saw a photo that showed the animal's unusual markings. The plan is to enter him in a national exhibition. "He's a natural cutting horse," the proud owner exclaimed, telling how he moves right into a herd of cattle and cuts off one from the rest, without his rider directing him to do so.

There's one problem, however. A professional horse trainer was consulted, and, told about the animal's natural ability, said that they had already made a major mistake. A horse must never be allowed to cut off cattle by himself, without the rider giving a command, for obedience to his master is the key to a champion.

This is also a story about you and me. Oswald Chambers wrote, "The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies but its obedience." It is wonderful to worship the Lord, remembering that the abiding fruit of true worship is always a faithful walk, not awesome feelings. It is wonderful to be naturally gifted, remembering that God desires our surrender more than our service. He is the God of surprises, who sometimes uses surprising people to accomplish His will. His work through us is never limited by our lack of giftedness but only by our disobedience.

The world has seen enough of what we can do. It is time for God's people to seek the Lord, that the world might see what He can do. Our natural gifts may be used to God's obedience to His control. To obey is better than sacrifice (I Samuel 15:22). Going ahead of God toward goals that He has not set is no better than lagging behind Him. Both directions point to disobedience.

The Lord is seeking servants not supervisors, whose availability is more important than their ability. One of the reasons why many will still see and know "that this work was done by our God" (Nehemiah 6:16), as they did when the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt, is that it can be accomplished through such unlikely instruments. Then God receives the glory, which is the most important result of all.

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

### Parish Education needs mission stories

The Parish Education Department would like to compile a collection of true mission stories from our own AFLC people who have served as missionaries in foreign countries or who have participated in short-term mission projects. We hope to make these available to our churches to use with their Sunday school classes and opening chapel time. These can be typewritten or dictated onto a cassette tape. We look forward to hearing from you!

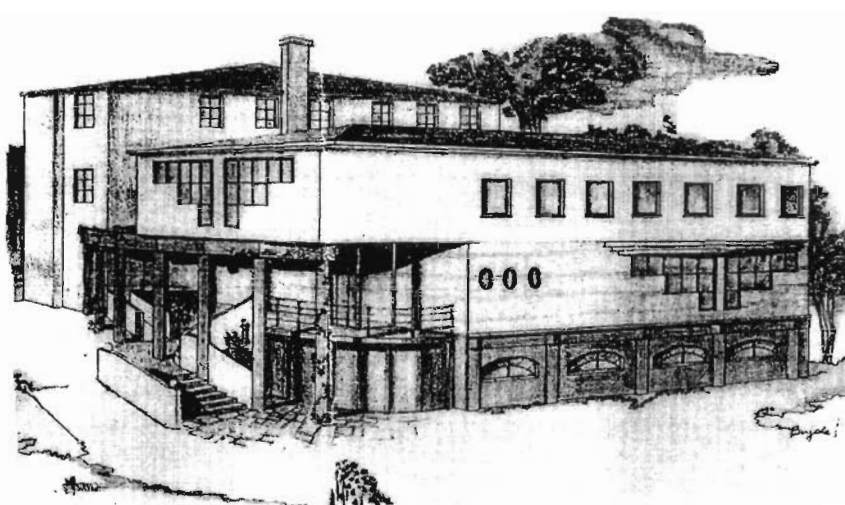
AFLC Parish Education  
3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Minneapolis, MN 55441  
(612) 545-5631  
FAX (612) 545-0079

# Polish Lutheran Bible School to open

**D**uring the last week of September, Renata Hinrichs, serving as translator, and Pastor Gregory Giemza of Dziegielow, Poland visited the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Minneapolis. They came to the largest two-year Lutheran Bible School in America to learn what are its goals, emphasis, curriculum, and how it is administered and supported financially. They were also seeking to establish a relationship with the AFLC school for prayer support and encouragement.

"We see God's leading in this effort to begin a Polish Lutheran Bible School," said Pastor Giemza. He was appointed last year to be the Home Mission Director of the Polish Lutheran Church which has a priority to open a Bible school. "We need lay people trained to work in congregations," he continued. "In Bible school we hope to get people studying the Word of God. That will bring spiritual revival. We want a Lutheran school because we don't have one and our young people go to other schools and return with non-Lutheran doctrines. Our church needs to stand on the Bible. We hope to see revival in Poland."

The idea of a Bible school began in the 1950s when Bible conferences and evangelism crusades started to grow — from 30 people to 3000 people today at the annual summer tent crusade



in Dziegielow. Orphanages and nursing homes were built. This is an outgrowth of the revival in the south of Poland at the turn of the century. Evangelism and social ministry involved both pastors and lay people but then World War II destroyed so much. Then in the 1950s that movement slowly began to grow again. Until now, according to Pastor Giemza, "It just was not the climate to start a Bible school. Now we see the economy improving and we have a bishop who is promoting this. Also church and state laws open doors for more freedom in our country." The Polish Lutheran Church has nearly 150 congregations with 80,000 members. Lutheran is the largest Protestant denomination in Poland where 95% of the people are Catholic.

Giemza heads the Center for Missions and Evangelism in

Dziegielow where they hope to coordinate ongoing ministries and start a Bible school, God willing, to open its doors on October 8, 1998.

Renata Hinrichs and her husband Pastor Tim Hinrichs, AFLC missionary on loan to the East European Missions Network, live only about 10 km from Dziegielow, across the border in Cesky Tesin, Czech Republic. Pastor Hinrichs expects to be a Bible school teacher in the new school. Renata, a native of Poland, is tri-lingual and has had a real vision for the Polish Lutheran Bible School.



— Solveig Hjermstad

## The AFLC Foundation

- + **providing** stewardship opportunities for your accumulated assets.
- + **arranging** for your gifts to grow beyond face value, benefitting you and the AFLC.

- + **supporting** AFLC ministries.

**Contact:** Ernie Miedema at the AFLC headquarters — 1-612-545-5631 or Mark D. Johnson at 1-800-950-2109

*Give thanks to Him;  
bless His name.  
For the Lord is good;  
- Psalm 100:4-5*



# Why take a mission trip?

— Jeremy Larson

**A** mission trip can benefit a person in a variety of ways. One of the great things about our God is that He is very personal and can teach two people on the same trip completely different things, and yet be exactly what each one needed at the time. Because God teaches everyone individually, I can't tell you why you should take a mission trip. I can only tell you what I learned.

I went to Brazil on the Free Lutheran Youth team several years ago. One of the biggest benefits to me was the opportunity to meet most of our AFLC missionaries to Brazil and understand what their ministry is all about. I had no idea we had so much going on down there. I saw the chal-

lenges they face every day dealing with the culture, language, ministry, finances, and then the stress of raising a family in a culture that is even "less Christian" than ours. We need to be praying for our missionaries!

I heard a speaker one time say it best: "Mission work is all out war because you are meeting the enemy on his soil and taking back the land." They need support not only in finances, but also in encouragement and most of all in prayer. "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31-32).

Another thing I learned can best be described by a story. A man was watching his wife prepare a large roast. The wife took the roast, cut off one end and put the larger part in a pot in the oven while discarding the smaller part. The man thought this was strange and asked his wife why she did that. The wife said it was the way her mother did it. So at the next opportunity, the husband asked his mother-in-law why she cut off the end of her roasts before cooking them. She said also that it was the way her mother did it. So the husband went to the grandmother and asked her the same question. She responded, "My pot is too small to hold the whole roast!"

After coming back from a culture that many times does things so differently, I have had a greater tendency to wonder why we do things the way we do. If someone asks me why I am doing something a certain way, I do not like to answer them by saying, "We've

always done it this way." What if we have always had a small pot and we just got a bigger one? I had better have an answer for them.

In wondering why things are done the way they are, I have many times developed a greater appreciation for our traditions by realizing why they were established in the first place and what they are designed to protect us from. Observing a different set of traditions can serve to broaden your perspective on things and motivate you to seek an answer to the question "why?"

A year ago I had the opportunity to go to Asia for six weeks. I was in a country that has been closed to the gospel for more than 50 years and parts of the country for 500 years. Yet the students I talked with were all extremely interested in what the Christian faith was all about. (I just learned that one of these friends of mine became a new Christian this past May. Praise God!)

As I walked along the streets and saw all the people, I thought about how many there are and how they had never had a chance to hear. I thought about how the town I grew up in had 350 people and three churches. I thought about how America is so blessed financially and yet it often takes years for a potential missionary to raise enough money to go. And then I thought about how I was part of the problem.

If you have the opportunity to go, the heart to go, and the call to go, then go. If you are not sure then "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7). He will direct you in His time.

I consider it the greatest privilege a person can receive: to be called by God to bring His message of salvation to a people who have never heard. If I am not given this privilege, then I will work to allow my friends to go. That's what God showed me.



The author is pictured loading his car to return to Fargo, North Dakota, after last month's Campus Days at AFLBS. He is a member of the AFLC Youth Board.



## WOMEN'S PAGE

**A** Bible dictionary's definition of revival is "renewed zeal to worship and obey God." Jesus stated the command declaring two inseparable aspects of spiritual life — worship and service. "You shall worship the LORD your God, and serve Him only" (Matthew 4:10).

### We need revival

The effects of the frightening lows in morality, justice and a ordered society cry for revival. Renewal is needed so that we would worship "in spirit and truth" and laborers would be sent into fields of souls near and far. The fields stand ready for harvest. But our personal lives chase endlessly in selfish pursuits. We are too often lulled into a casual view of sin and distracted from a devotional life and spiritual focus by materialistic goals.

### Only God can send revival

Revival is the life-giving work of His Spirit. The psalmist pleaded, "Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy word" (Psalm 119:107,149,154). David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). In His faithfulness, God promises to hear our prayers for help, forgive sin, and heal the land (II Chronicles 7:14). He promises renewed strength (Isaiah 40:31; Ephesians 3:16). He provides strong support (II Chronicles 16:9a).

### Obedience prepares the way

By obedience to the commands of Scripture, the work of the Spirit is made welcome in our midst (John 14:21,23).

We are called to humble ourselves — II Chronicles 7:14; James 4:6-10.

To confess and turn from sin —

## Our need for revival

Proverbs 28:13; I John 1:9.

To surrender our lives as living sacrifices — Romans 12:1; 6:13; Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

To bear witness to His salvation — Psalm 96:2-3; Acts 1:8.

With thanksgiving — Ephesians 5:20.

As we enter the Advent Season, may we sense Christ's renewing work in our nation, churches and personal lives that we might "prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). May we be encouraged by Hosea 6:3 to

**press on to know the LORD, ... and He will come to us.**

*Disturb me, Christ,  
by night and day.*

*Disturb me when I cease to pray.*

*Disturb me, Christ, whenever I*

*By silence would Your name deny.*

*Disturb me, Christ, until I see*

*there is not other way for me*

*No place where I am needed more*

*Than helping others*

*find Your door.*

— author unknown

— Rosalie Paulson  
Calvary Lutheran  
Fosston, Minnesota

"Come to Jesus for Revival," is the last lesson in the 1997 WMF Bible study, *Come to Jesus, Share with Others*. The 1998 WMF Bible study is available. *Joy for the Journey* is a study on Hebrews, written by Lynn Wellumson, Williston, North Dakota. Cost is \$5 for single copy and \$3 for orders of five or more (includes postage). Write to Karen Knudsvig, RR2, Box 11, Buxton, North Dakota 58218.

**Pastor Rob Lewis**, Camrose, Alberta, led the AFLC pastors' retreat at the Elbow Bible Camp during September 8-12. Pastor Lewis shared many practical and inspirational insights into God's Word with a perspective on missions and prayer. He is the World Mission Prayer League's Canadian director.

**Camrose, Alberta** — Solid Rock Free Lutheran sent 12 youth and four leaders on a two-week summer mission trip to Sandpit, B.C. which is on the Queen Charlotte Islands. The group ministered to local youth and worked on a church building. They returned excited to share with the congregation the growth in their relationship to God and with one another.

**Pastor Wayne Hjermstad**, Faith, South Dakota has been appointed to serve on the Commission on Evangelism until next June's annual conference in Northfield, Minnesota. He fills the position vacated by Pastor Tom Olson, who resigned in order to prepare for his new ministry in Alaska.

**Pitt Meadows, British Columbia** is the area near Vancouver, being looked at for a proposed home mission work by the Canadian Coordinating Committee. AFLC-Canada President Gene Sundby writes, "This whole area of the lower mainland is only about 4% church. Pitt Meadows has a population of about 15,000 and does not appear to have any evangelical work in its midst."



## Home Missions receives grant money from LB

AFLC Home Missions is the recipient of \$13,200 in church extension grant funds from the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation for 1997. These funds were divided equally between three Home Mission congregations: Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Palmdale, California; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Beulah, North Dakota; and Maranatha Free Lutheran Church, Willmar, Minnesota.

Lutheran Brotherhood grant funds are used to help defray pastors' salaries through monthly subsidies.

This LBF grant program gives eight Lutheran national church bodies \$1,790,000 each year to develop new congregations and assist established congregations to undertake special evangelism programs.

**Kalispell, Montana** — Home Missions Director Paul Nash spoke at special meetings at the Stillwater and Faith Lutheran churches during October 10-12. He encouraged the Kalispell congregations, while seeking God's will in a church planting outreach, to grow in prayer and discipleship themselves. According to Faith Lutheran's pastor, Steve Snipstead, "We're asking God about planting a new congregation, but God says, 'Wait, you're not quite ready yet.'"

**Vernon, British Columbia** — Living Word Lutheran enjoyed their Gardom Lake Retreat on the last weekend of September. Canadian Evangelist Olaf Frigstad spoke on the theme, "Blessed to be a Blessing."



This Cessna airplane is the number one mode of transportation between churches. Pastor Olson and his family are beginning their new ministry next June.

## On to Alaska

— Pastor Tom Olson  
Timberland and Hosanna Parish  
Cumberland, Wisconsin

**I**n 1982 I attended the Alaska Mission Convention at Bad Axe Lutheran in rural Viroqua, Wisconsin. I sat by an elderly Alaskan missionary named Oscar Brown. Oscar asked me if I would like to go to Alaska some day. I answered, "Yes."

Little did I know that it would lead to a life calling.

In January 1983, I made my first Alaskan Mission trip to Cordova to build a basement under the mission building. In April, I went to observe the work in Naknek and there I sought the Lord for my future. Although those people wanted me to stay, God led me to attend the Free Lutheran Seminary. I took one year to teach school in Glenallen, Alaska, to make money and get bills paid before coming to seminary.

After graduation, I supported the work in Alaska but sensed a call to serve the AFLC parish in Cumberland, Wisconsin. Here I received experience as a pastor, learned about carpentry through two major building programs, met people who will be my life-

time prayer partners and best of all found my wonderful wife, Sharon, and together we've had three children.

Now nearly ten years later, God is sending me back to Alaska. The Lutheran Mission Societies has called us to oversee their work in Naknek, Alaska. This is a fishing village on Bristol Bay in southwestern Alaska and boasts the world's best salmon fisheries.

I will wear many hats. Naknek Lutheran Community Church, currently about 25 people strong, has called me to be their pastor. The Naknek and King Salmon area has 1,800 year-round residents which explodes to about 30,000 summer residents. I am learning how to fly an airplane in order to cross the Naknek River regularly to South Naknek to serve as a missionary to that community of about 150 people (mostly Aleuts) where, at best, a handful claim to know Christ. I will also have general oversight duties for Bay Broadcasting which runs our mission's "state-of-the-art"

(continued on next page)



South Naknek Church.



Harlan Olson, Tom's dad, photographs the fishing boats on Naknek River.

## TO ALASKA

Christian radio station KAKN. This will include a daily 1/2 hour radio broadcast. Our radio station has three full-time missionaries who do a great job of quality broadcasting.

The responsibilities are staggering. I will need much prayer support from all of you. The mission hopes to call a full-time missionary for South Naknek as soon as possible as well as a fourth worker, an engineer, for KAKN.

Lutheran Mission societies is a Norwegian Lutheran independent mission that has been working in Alaska for over 76 years. Some of you may recall their paper, *Norsk Ungdom*. They have tried to fill needs that other churches are not doing. They have had fishermen's homes, churches, a boys' home and other outreaches. Our mission, commonly call **The Alaska Mission**, is now focusing on the southwestern region of that vast state. The radio station has such great potential for the region. If we get on the satellite, we can reach the whole state and beyond. It is our immediate desire to provide Christian radio for Bristol Bay and the Aleutian Chain along with personal ministry and follow-up by missionary pilots. We also desire to encour-

age lonely and forgotten missionaries of all denominations and reach out to small villages where there is no evangelical work.

I personally have a vision of AFLBS students going up for summer jobs and short-term missions. We need to get solid people from the AFLC and other like-minded Christians who can serve Christ in the North. These workers need to be able to work well in a community church setting since Alaska does not lend itself well to "pure" denominational churches. I would like to see Christians get jobs in the area and be self-supporting missionaries. I have great hopes that many AFLC youth will give their lives to serve Jesus in Alaska as missionaries, bush pilots, radio workers, carpenters, and community members.

AFLC Home Missions has accepted me as a pastor working in cooperation with Lutheran Mission Societies and under the guidance and oversight of both boards. I am quite certain that the magnitude of the work will be beyond the scope of the Alaska Mission alone, and that I will be asking the AFLC Home Mission Department to seriously consider targeting unreached and needy communities in Alaska. The possibilities are thrilling! This area is of strategic importance for nat-

ural resources and defense. It is also a strategic center for mission work, not only in Alaska, but Japan, China, Korea, Mongolia, and especially the vast forgotten regions of eastern Siberia.

Hear their voices calling, "Come over and help us!" Could you join me in this exciting (but chilly) outreach?



The "cry for help" is intensifying in Home Mission and from around the world! Pray for our leaders, our pastors, our missionaries, and for each member of the Body of Christ, that each might follow in obedience God's perfect will.

## New AFLC congregations

**Skrefsrud Lutheran, Beresford, South Dakota** — On October 26, 1997, Skrefsrud Lutheran, formerly ELCA, made its second and final vote to request affiliation with the AFLC. The congregation has been served for the past 15 months by Pastor Tom Gilman of nearby Redeemer Lutheran, Canton.

**Grace Lutheran, Buckley, Washington** has been placed on the AFLC congregational roster by the Coordinating Committee. The congregation of approximately 100 members recently voted unanimously to no longer be an independent group and to affiliate with the AFLC. Grace Lutheran is located in the foothills of Mt. Rainier, just east of Tacoma.

**Willamette Free Lutheran, Beaverton, Oregon**, held their first worship service on October 26, 1997. The new mission congregation is served by Pastor Craig Johnson. Beaverton is a suburb of Portland, Oregon.

**Pastor James Vineyard, Mandan, North Dakota**, began serving Good Shepherd Lutheran in Pleasanton, Texas, on November 1. Pastor Vineyard, a former AALC clergyman, was placed on the AFLC fellowship clergy roster by recent action of the Coordinating Committee.

**Milford, Illinois** — This advent season, St. John's Lutheran has ordered a box of the 80 minute abridged video edition of the *Jesus Film* for members to buy as meaningful Christmas gifts for family and friends. The video is available for \$5 plus shipping from Campus Crusade for Christ. For more information, call 1 (800) 295-3787.

**Greenbush, Minnesota** — Oiland Free Lutheran hosted special meetings on October 12-15 with Pastor Leroy Flickinger, Newfolden, Minnesota as the guest speaker.

**Summer team requests needed** — Ministry teams from the Bible School and Home Missions department are being organized. If your church desires a team, please contact the Bible School by March 1, 1998. A \$600 donation is suggested for a four to five member team for one week. Call (612) 544-9501 for more information.



Skrefsrud Lutheran, Beresford, South Dakota.

## 1998 AMBASSADOR schedule

Below is the 1998 Lutheran Ambassador schedule. Please make each issue an item of prayer. Take note of the deadlines and special emphasis of each issue. If you have an interest in writing or an idea regarding a certain issue, please contact the editors.

<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Editor's Deadline</u>	<u>Special Emphasis</u>
<b>January 6</b>	<b>November 28</b>	<b>Evangelism</b>
<b>February 3</b>	<b>December 30</b>	<b>AFLBS &amp; AFLTS</b>
February 24	January 16	Lent
<b>March 17</b>	<b>February 6</b>	<b>Easter</b>
April 7	February 27	Relationships
<b>April 28</b>	<b>March 20</b>	<b>Pre-Conference</b>
May 19	April 10	Vision
<b>June 9</b>	<b>May 1</b>	<b>Children &amp; Youth</b>
June 30	May 22	Grace
<b>August 4</b>	<b>June 26</b>	<b>Conference Review</b>
<b>August 25</b>	<b>July 17</b>	<b>Sunday School</b>
September 22	August 14	Small Groups
<b>October 13</b>	<b>September 4</b>	<b>Missions —</b>
		<b>Home &amp; World</b>
November 3	September 25	Reformation
<b>November 24</b>	<b>October 16</b>	<b>Thanksgiving</b>
<del>December 10</del>	<del>November 6</del>	<b>&amp; Advent</b>
		<b>Christmas</b>

**Bold is for the 24 page issues.**

# Mark Johnson joins AFLBS administration



Mark and Sarah Johnson and family, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, are moving to Minneapolis where Mark will join the AFLBS administration as Dean of Students on January 1, 1998. Mark is a 1988 Bible School graduate and Sarah (Huglen) graduated in 1989.

Both Mark and Sarah grew up in parsonages: Pastor Wendell and Laurel Johnson of Cambridge, Minnesota, and Pastor Erling and Rhoda Huglen of Roseau, Minnesota. The Johnsons have lived in Fergus Falls where he was general manager of a radio station and most recently was the half-time youth worker for Calvary Lutheran along with his work in advertising.

Mark joins the Bible school administration at a time when the school is experiencing unprecedented growth. This year's record enrollment is over 140 with projections for next September's student body to be over 160. As Dean of Students, Mark will be a collaborator with AFLBS Dean James L. Johnson, who will focus more of his time on teaching and public relations. The Dean of Students job description includes overseeing student life, the details of operating the school, and speaking at churches and summer camps. He will also teach an evening class.



**New staff at the AFLC Schools**, pictured (L. to R.): Sarah Olson, AFLBS secretary; Louise Burton, AFLTS secretary/librarian; Ellen Erdman, AFLBS interim administrative assistant; and (seated) Tara Cherney, AFLBS secretary. Not pictured is Cindy Schlenk who is a part-time secretary to Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Director of Vision 2004. The building committee voted on an architect at their November 3 meeting as plans are underway to break ground next spring for the multi-purpose gym/student center/classroom building.



**The new women's resident head**, Michele Deubner (L.) visited with AFLBS graduates Eric Rasmussen, '96, of Park River, North Dakota, and Rachel Dahl, '95, of Borup, Minnesota, after the Campus Days opening service. Dr. Steve Lombardo, Newark, Illinois, was the featured speaker, coinciding with Medicine Lake Lutheran's Life in Christ Crusade. Dr. Lombardo also preached at special morning campus chapel services on October 20-22.

If you missed us  
this fall,  
check out Campus Days  
next April 3-5



## Campus Book Nook expands service

The campus bookstore now carries more than just textbooks. According to Louise Burton, librarian and store manager: "The Book Nook is now carrying cards, stationary and some gift items." Check out the Book Nook next time you are visiting the campus. The store is located in the lower level of the chapel and administration offices of the schools.

## Seminarians receive financial aid

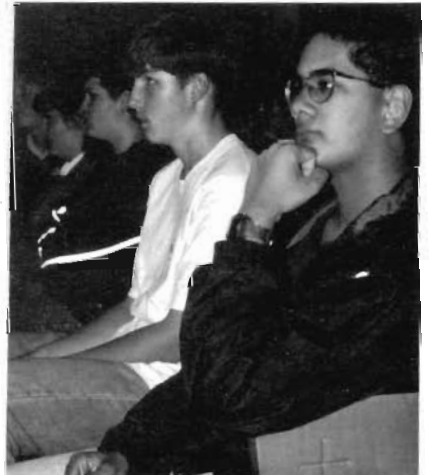
Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean, reports an unusually high amount of financial aid available to this year's seminarians. About \$28,000 is being shared with eleven students. Financial aid comes from various sources: congregations, individuals and Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood.



Fall AFLBS Campus Days began with a concert by 1984 AFLBS graduate, Yvonne Blake, (L.) of Ontonagon, Michigan, pictured with Marge Jacobson, '78, Champlin, Minnesota.

Approximately 100 high school guests gathered at the first-ever Fall Campus Days hosted by AFLBS during October 17-19.

Spring Campus Days is scheduled for April 3-5, 1998.



### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - October 31, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$279,330.00	\$19,001.06	166,118.16	59
Seminary . . . . .	113,300.00	10,330.49	73,749.51	65
Bible School . . . . .	142,509.00	10,350.80	85,639.28	60
Home Missions . . . . .	257,432.00	20,565.19	154,154.00	60
World Missions . . . . .	341,000.00	36,605.94	280,868.96	82
Capital Investment . . . . .	19,000.00	1,595.13	11,285.89	59
Parish Education . . . . .	56,517.00	3,873.04	41,656.99	74
Church Extension . . . . .	14,813.00	264.92	13,722.74	93
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,223,901.00</b>	<b>102,586.57</b>	<b>827,195.53</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>TOTALS 1996 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,232,267.00</b>	<b>107,100.25</b>	<b>868,031.72</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Goal 83%</b>				



## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Steve Papillon**, Bloomington, Minnesota, has resigned from the education staff at Emmaus Lutheran where he has served for nine years, in order to accept the call from Zion Lutheran in Wadena, Minnesota. He was placed on the AFLC's lay pastor clergy roster. He expects to begin his new ministry the end of November.

**Pastor Allan Ness**, Oregon, Wisconsin, was installed as pastor of Bethany Lutheran in Broadhead, Wisconsin on November 2, by AFLC President Robert Lee. Pastor Ness, formerly an ELCA clergyman, was placed on the AFLC fellowship clergy roster by recent action of the Coordinating Committee.

**Annual AFLBS  
Parents' Day  
December 6, 1997  
Schools' Christmas Concert  
December 7 at 4 and 7 p.m.**

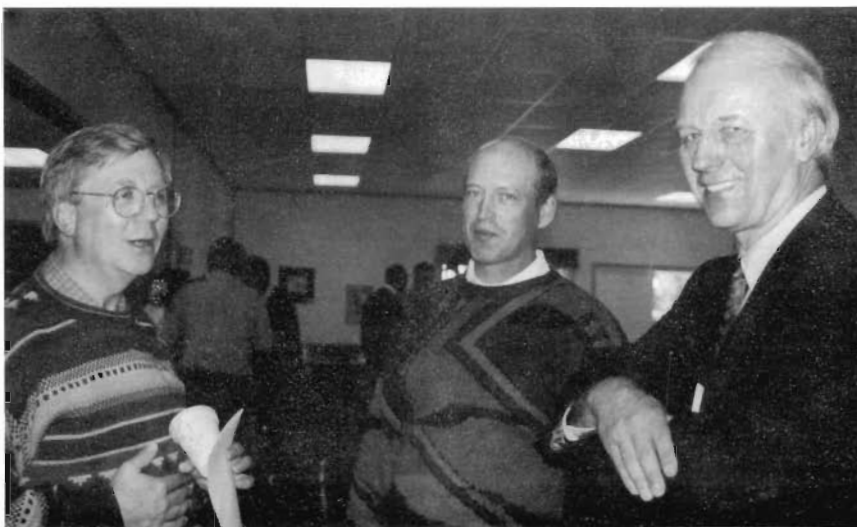
### Former LFC pastors pass away

Three former Lutheran Free Church pastors who served AFLC congregations in the past died during the past year.

Rev. Ernest J. Raaum, 89, Everett, Washington, who died on May 6, was once the pastor of Westaker and Bethania congregations, Newfolden, Minnesota and Alma congregation, Argyle, Minnesota.

Rev. John O. Johanson, 94, Northwood, North Dakota, who died on May 18, served the Dalton, Minnesota, parish for ten years until 1963.

Rev. Harald D. Grindal, 80, Minneapolis, Minnesota, a son of Triumph (formerly First) Lutheran Church, Ferndale, Washington, died on May 26. His first parish after ordination was Tioga, North Dakota.



Ron Nelson, Flaxton, North Dakota; Pastor Henry Mohagen, Towner, North Dakota, and Dr. Francis Monseth, Rogers, Minnesota, enjoy the coffee break at the all-boards meeting at the ARC last fall.

### AFLC Memorial Gifts

#### September 1997

Name	Given By	Department
Robert Backman	Lyell/Lois Johnson	AFLBS
Adeline Olson	Lowel/DonnaMae Hogberg	
Harvey Quamme and Viola Hermo		
Aaron Olson	Mr/Mrs. Percy Strand	
Myrtle Carlson	Vernon/Dorothy Russum	
Mabel Flagstad	Mr/Mrs. Alfred Haugen	
Ken/Corolla Stenberg	Ben/Sheila McClenahan	
Ralph Beyer	Delbert/LuVern Jones	
Pastor John Strand	Dr/Mrs. Francis Monseth	
	Robert/Carol Dietsche	
	Betty Jane Mathison	
	The Strand family	General Fund
	Dr/Mrs. Francis Monseth	
	Pastor/Mrs. Laurel Udden	
	Joanne Jorgenson Grubb	Building Fund
Orland Urevig	Lorraine Wasland	Home Missions
	Marvid Peterson	
	Emma Sakariason	
	Robert Miller	
	Robinson family	
	Robert/Carol Dietsche	
Wylie Robinson	Grace WMF, Bruce, SD	
Roy Hougdaal	James/Lori Keller	
Pastor D. Brostroms' mother	Family/Friends	
Dolette Hjermstad	Pastor Ted/Dee Berkas	AFLTS
	Myron/Darlene Hjermstad	World Missions
	Stanley Hjermstad	
	Grace Hjermstad	
	Norman/Belva Sunne	
	Arle Sunne	
	Darrell/Mary Sunvold	
Richard E. Johnson	Erwin/Bethel Cudmore	
Alice Liddle	Valborg Huglen	
Inga Huglen	Mr/Mrs. Lauren Anderson	
Wylie Robinson	Irvin/Ruth Hodnefield	Schools
Mavis Wicks		



## Why?

**S**omeone has already written a book attempting to answer the “why” question that is most frequently asked: “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

I’d like to write a book addressing the other “why” question: “Why do good things happen to bad people?” That’s a question to stretch the mind and encourage the heart.

A book like that would be autobiographical in nature. In the view of some I suppose I could title an autobiography with the question “why have all these bad things happened to a good person like me?” I do not have a wild past to write about. Compared to some I’ve “been good.” And some may think I have had more than “my share of bad things.” My father, mother, sister and brother all died before I turned 35. Yet, an honest examination of my life leads to asking the question: why have so many good things happened to a sinful person like me?

We foolishly think at times we deserve better from God than what we receive. Job’s wife thought God’s treatment of them was totally unfair. Job’s response was “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10, NIV). God “does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10, NIV).

When I was looking for a place to live recently I came across an advertisement that said, “This is the apartment you deserve.” My thought was, “I don’t want to live in a dump like that.”

I do not want to be in the place that is appropriate for a person like me. I do not want to receive from God what I have earned. I want mercy and grace.

Why bad things happen to people like you and me is not enjoyable, but it is not that difficult to understand. We are sinful. We have ignored and disobeyed the commands of the Holy, Almighty and Loving God. He has all the right in the world to step in and punish whenever and however He wants. He is also completely justified if He wants to step back and simply let us suffer the consequences of our actions.

Why do bad things happen? I wonder why more bad things don’t happen. It is the good things that happen that amaze me.

Why was I born into a loving family that cared for me, provided for me, and taught me about Jesus? I could have been like far too many other children who

are abused and neglected. I could have been in a home where I was never told of the love of God.

Why was I brought to a Sunday school and church where I was faithfully taught God’s Word? I could have been brought to a place where the message was one of deception and the path I was pointed to led to destruction. Instead I received tremendous instruction, examples and encouragement to walk in God’s truth.

Why have I been permitted as a pastor to be a part of congregations that have been extremely supportive and loving? I hear stories of situations where pastors suffer through terrible trials. I admire their ability to endure and overcome, and I doubt that I could do the same. I am thankful I have not had to find out. I am thankful I have not been and am not in the congregations where I deserve to be.

Why do I have friends who are so kind and caring? It is tempting to look at people and see their sin and think about how they should do better. But then I think about what the Bible says about my sinful nature and their’s, and I am amazed that any love and goodness is shown in any of our lives.

Why do I have a roof over my head, clothes to wear, food to eat, and other blessings too numerous to recount and far surpassing what are necessities? And most of all, why did Jesus die on the cross for my sins and rise from the dead so that I can have my

sins forgiven and have the assurance of eternal life, enjoyed in His presence? The human mind cannot fully comprehend it and make sense of it. No reasonable explanation exists. It is because of grace: God’s goodness, unmerited in any way. Our response is to receive it, be amazed by it, tell others about it, and say, “thanks.”

As the songwriter has said: “I don’t know why Jesus loves me. I don’t know why He cares. I don’t know why He sacrificed His life, but I’m glad, so glad He did.”

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, are you asking the right “why” question? Are you foolishly wondering why you haven’t been treated better? Or are you humbly wondering why God cares for you at all, and has been so good?

“God is so good, He’s so good to me,” and to you. Let’s give Him thanks.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

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## Free and Living: What does it mean to us?

**F**ormer president of Augsburg College, Dr. B. M. Christensen, said it well when he characterized the Lutheran Free Church as “a cooperative venture in building Lutheran congregations by means of a dominant emphasis neither upon organization nor upon the intricacies of doctrine but upon living and personal Christian experience. ... It is an experiment in extreme ecclesiastical democracy and decentralization. It is a searching test of faith in the power of the Spirit of God.”

The key phrases here, it seem, are “an experiment in extreme ecclesiastical democracy” and “a searching test of faith in the power of the Spirit of God.” These two phrases define the decentralization polity of the AFLC as well as its emphasis on free and living congregations dependent on the Spirit of God.

“Free and living congregations” — the watchwords of the Association, yet what do they mean? How many of us could define or explain what a free and living congregation is? Or what is a Spirit-guided congregation?

In this concluding article, I think it appropriate to let Georg Sverdrup's words speak to the issue that was so dear to his heart. Though he has written much concerning the New Testament congregation, few of his writings are as concise on this matter as those that appeared in the December 1896 issues of *Folkebladet*. (We are grateful to Mr. John Horn for his recent translation of this article.)

According to Sverdrup, the Spirit-guided, living congregation has four distinguishing characteristics.

**First**, a living congregation has an overwhelming concern for the lost. “If the Spirit of God is in the congregation, then there will be first a manifestation of zeal for the saving of souls. That is the first and most important of all the marks of life, ... the godly burning desire for the salvation of souls. ... All other considerations are set aside, and then the only thing that matters is this question: can we awaken the sleeping, can we save the dying, can we free the slaves, can we lead them to everlasting life?”

**Second**, the bondage to outward forms of religion will be broken. In its place will be “Bible reading and prayer and song both in the homes and the church.”

**Third**, if there is spirit and freedom in the congregation, church members will no longer live for material possessions and money — greedily hoarding it up or spending it selfishly. In living congregations “one lives for God and for Christ and the congregation. Then one tries to earn money so one can give for the purpose of furthering the interest of God's kingdom.”

**Fourth**, all members of the congregation, laity as well as pastors, will be working together, using the gifts God has given to build the fellowship. “If the Spirit is in the congregation, then differences in rank and pride of office are at an end. There is only one rank which has any worth, that is the rank of grace; and there is only one

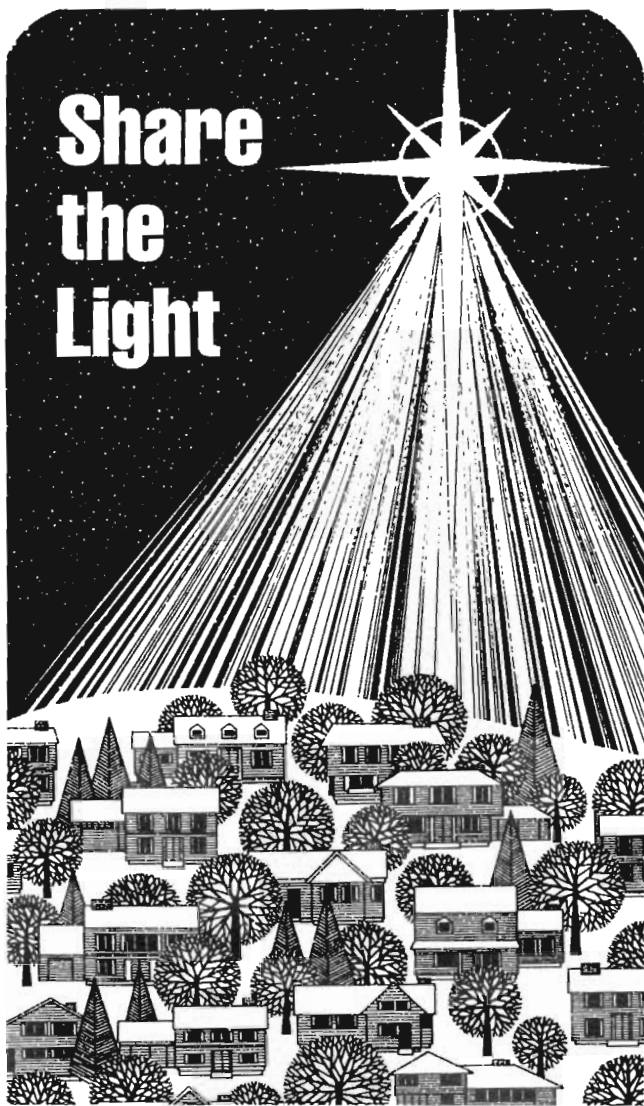
rank that is sought after, a godly, childlike heart.” Therefore, the work of the church should not be left to the pastor alone; there is work for everyone. “The Scripture teaches that there are different gifts of grace, but the same Spirit. ... The free congregation does not know a difference of rank between pastor and lay people. It only knows the difference between different works, the different gifts and different times and opportunities that are given to the individual Christian.”

Here in the waning days of 1997, Sverdrup's message is as vital today as it was a hundred years ago. The heart of the AFLC is the congregation; and the heart of the congregation is the Spirit and the Word. Where the Spirit and the Word are allowed to work, there will be a desire for souls, Bible reading in the homes, cheerful giving, and an active laity. If our congregations remain true to these principles, we have faith that by “the power of the Spirit of God” this “experiment in extreme ecclesiastical democracy” will continue well into the next century.



— Loiell Dyrud  
Our Saviour's Lutheran  
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

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