

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

November 26, 1996

THANKFUL



for
what
is to
come



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Gratitude or ingratitude

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

— Colossians 2:6-7

The definition of grateful is thankful, gratitude, deeply appreciative, indebted. To give thanks is to express appreciation to, make acknowledgment to, tender thanks to, be grateful to, to bless (Family Word Finder).

The word "thank" originates from Old English "thanc, thanks, thought." Thus there was once a semantic connection between giving thanks and being thoughtful. In other words, gratitude or thankfulness is not static but active. It translates into thoughtfulness or grateful action.

Most, if not all of us, have had to deal with some very ungrateful people. When you reach out to help them you find absolutely no sign of appreciation. We are not to do our good deeds for the reward of thanks, but a thankful person who appreciates it and shows gratitude certainly helps to inspire one to do more.

There is much malcontent and ingratitude in the world today. The hew and cry is, "give me my rights, I am deserving." The Apostle Paul wrote, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, *unthankful*, unholy" (II Timothy 3:1-2, italics added). We who profess the Name of Christ should not allow this ingratitude to rub off on us. God forbid!

This is to be an encouraging word. I wish to encourage us with

the words of Paul in our text. As we have received Christ Jesus, we are admonished to "walk in Him." Our whole life is to be *Cristo Centric* or Christ-centered. We are to be rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith. This makes for consistent, mature Christianity, which is as Paul concludes — *abounding in it with thanksgiving!*

Can we comprehend all that we have in Christ? By God's grace, in spite of our total unworthiness, our life, our walk with him ought to be one of perpetual gratitude.

David was overwhelmed by the many graces of God. "My cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5b).

In my own life and heart, this is not as it ought to be. The dirt on the window pane often shows more than the beautiful scenery beyond it. Thank God that, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). As with the psalmist, I can say "He hath dealt bountifully with me."

As we enter into the Advent season, may it move us to thanksgiving translated into *thanksgiving*. May each of us experience Paul's desire for the Colossians:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart as to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

— Colossians 3:15-17

— Pastor Alvin Grothe
Astoria, Oregon

SOUND BITES

"Approach life like a voyage on a schooner. Enjoy the view. Explore the vessel. Make friends with the captain. Fish a little. And then get off when you get home." —Max Lucado



"The Second Advent is possible any day, impossible no day."

—Richard Trench



"Think what faith in Jesus Christ claims, that He can present us faultless before the throne of God, unutterably pure, absolutely rectified and profoundly justified. Stand in implicit adoring faith in Him."

—Oswald Chambers



"The primitive church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. The early Christians were looking not for a cleft in the ground called a grave, but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory. They were watching not for the 'undertaker' but for the 'Uppertaker.'"

—Alexander Maclaren



"Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices, who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices; who from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today."

—Martin Rinkart



"We are not a post-war generation, but a pre-peace generation. Jesus is coming." —Corrie Ten Boom

My brother's love



— Pastor Dan Klug
*Christ the King
Lutheran
East Grand Forks,
Minnesota*

It was a crisp fall evening in 1977 at Blackduck, Minnesota. I was a seventh grader sitting in the stands at one of our high school football games. The opposing team had the ball and was putting together a good drive. The quarterback pitched the ball to the halfback. He found an opening and cut up field: it looked like a touchdown. However, number 41 was on the defense. He wasn't the biggest or the fastest, but he drew his sights on the halfback and made a crunching hit. The hometown crowd erupted in cheers. Over the loud speaker, the announcer yelled, "Tackle by number 41, Luther Klug!"

It's been nineteen years and I am still very proud of my brother, Luther.

It was no surprise to my family or me when Luther went to school for law enforcement.

I remember fondly when he would return home during breaks from school. I was captivated with the various tools of the trade, such as the firearms, billy-clubs and self-defense techniques. We loved to stage simulations. I was the "bad guy" and would hide somewhere in the house. Whatever the situation, it always ended in the same way: he got his man.

Over the years, Luther and I always

stayed in touch. We found a way to get together and have marvelous fellowship. He and his wife, Geri, would let me stay at their house whenever I needed to.

By 1995, Luther was in his fourteenth year of law enforcement. Just like football, he was hitting it hard with all he had. He was serving Minnesota's Dakota County as a deputy sheriff and was striving to make the rank of sergeant. He was the lead man on a swat team and also an instructor in self-defense and firearms. He was reaping the respect and rewards of all his hard work and dedication.

Luther was intensely driven to eradicate drunk drivers from the road. It was more than just a part of his job. It was a deep conviction and he excelled at it. He was going on three years in a row in leading Dakota County in DUI arrests. But then, ironically, it stopped abruptly.

On Monday night, July 15, 1996, Luther was in his squad car working his shift. It ended at 10 p.m. Earlier, at 9 p.m., he had called home and said good night to his four-year-old son, Jordon. On his way home, he responded to a back-up call for the police department of Hastings. Luther did not have to go, but he did because he was dedicated to helping "protect and serve." At 10:30 p.m., he called his wife, Geri, to let her know he was on his way home.

Driving on a county road a few miles out of Hastings, he was only 1/4 mile from the turn-off to his house. It was 10:45 p.m. as he passed the last intersection. At the same time, a drunk driver went through a stop sign at 60 to 65 mph and drove straight into my brother's door. Luther was badly injured and brought by helicopter to Ramsey County emergency room. The driver had a cut on his chin and was disorientated.

I was lying in bed sleeping when the phone woke me at 12:54 a.m. I am a pastor, and I know it isn't good news when the phone rings at night. It was my father. "Dan," he said, "Luther has been in a serious car accident. I'm going to go down there right away." I could hear him trying to be strong and hold back tears. I said, "You know he is in God's hands. He will be all right. Please drive safely."

I laid there in my bed, praying that Luther would be all right. I looked at the clock: 1:08 a.m. In my heart I asked the Lord, "Luther is dead, isn't he?" I felt an

My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad I know
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,
For He doth know the way.

Though night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break,
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

'There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll surely trust
And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make;
Through all the way, though dark to me,
He made not one mistake.

— A. M. Overton

FUTURISTIC THANKFULNESS

ACTS the professor wrote on the overhead and I copied it in my notes. "A is for adoration. C is for confession. T is for thanksgiving. S is for supplication." Little did I know at the time how much this acronym would help me develop an effective prayer life.

Once as I began T (thanking God), I realized that everything I was appreciative of was either in the past or present. The future, being unknown, was distant and seemed out of reach. How could I thank God for things that had no reality or significance in my life yet? The guarantee of job security for the rest of the school year, the birth of our second child next May, a new house next fall — what did I know about the future?

I wasn't sure how I could be truly thankful for what I could not see. Then I thought about our son, Alex. On his first birthday in July, he received a kid-sized dump truck. Even before we had ripped open the box, we were making "truck sounds" in happy anticipation. Isn't that what I can do about the future too?

I can thank God in joyful expectancy that what He has in store for me is always for my good (Romans 8:28). He loves me and has prepared the very best for me and for all who trust in Him. Something a box could never hold!

I can rest in His wonderful promise in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to

— Nathan Monseth
Emmaus Lutheran
Bloomington, Minnesota

give you a hope and a future."

Psalm 92:1 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name ..." No question about it. Saying thanks is important, but what is there to be thankful about? "Praise ye the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 106:1). Our Father's mercy was not just for our ancestors, or even only for us today. His mercy endures into the future! The entire chapter of Psalm 136 is a great example of futuristic thankfulness. His mercy truly does endure forever!

Because of His mercy we can thank God for the place He has already prepared for us beyond this earthly home. Paul was thankful for the future. He wrote to his Colossian friends, "We always thank God ... for the hope which is laid up for you" (1:3-5).

Where is that hope? A majority of today's society sees more hopelessness as they wait for the future and rightly so. Only as Christians do we have a HOPE — that which is in Jesus Christ and His promise to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3).

When I come to the T part of my prayer time now, it takes a little longer. God's blessings in the future will be so great and numerous that it will take an eternity to sing songs of thanksgiving to Him. Why not start today?



overwhelming peace and a "Yes, but everything will be okay. I am with you!"

Later I would find out that Luther died at 1:04 a.m. As I told my wife of my prayer experience, she reminded me that our bedroom clock was set ahead. I went and checked. It was four minutes fast.

I miss my brother's love immensely. I know there will not be a day that goes by that I won't grieve over his death. I also cannot understand why he died, especially since it was such a needless and completely preventable death. As I have agonized over his death, I have been greatly encouraged by God's love for me.

As a pastor, I often encourage people by saying, "Trust in Jesus and find strength. He loves you very much." I have always believed these words and said them in genuine love. But through my brother's death, I have come to experience firsthand the truth and strength of these words.

Jesus does love me. He has truly given me His strength and comforted me with His compassion. He has brought meaning and peace to an otherwise senseless and violent tragedy. He has helped fill the void left by the absence of my brother's love.





As I walked up to the little remodeled bunkhouse last October 8, I knew I was in for a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Stories of Grandma Lu had floated beyond her little community in that far northwestern county of South Dakota and her church, Slim Buttes Lutheran. Knocking on the door, I prayed that the Lord would sharpen my senses so I could observe and learn as much as possible from this legendary Lucille Coffield. My apprehension disappeared when she opened the door and I found myself getting a big hug from this tall, vigorous 96-year-old pioneer woman.

We sat in her tiny kitchen and I asked about her nomination to the Unsung Heroes and Good Hearts in South Dakota's Hall of Fame. Tears began to trickle down her cheeks as she said, "I don't understand. It never seemed that I did enough."

Lucille excused herself to get a Kleenex. I looked over by the window next to me. There on top of the little stand was her well-worn Bible and an already marked October 8 devotional reading. I read her underlined sentence:

*A Christian lifestyle is
Christ living His life through you.*

**"We didn't have wealth,
but we had everything."**

"God's greatest blessing to me is His giving strength to handle life's situations through the power of the Holy Spirit," she said as she returned to the kitchen. "I'll never forget homesteading in the fall of 1910. My mother and I with two brothers and a sister arrived from Minnesota by train to Reeder, North Dakota. Dad came on an immigrant car with all our earthly possessions such as a wagon, a shiny new stove, our horses, a tent, harness, some chickens, and a plow.

"We hitched up the team, tied the cow to the back and we were on our way to our new home 35 miles south. Dad built us a two-room sod house.

"As children on the prairie we would pick up cow chips, the big, flat, and dry ones. They're easier to stack to use for future fuel.

"One time our pastor told us about a lady who was making breakfast. She used the fork she was cooking with to pick up another cow chip for the fire. She simply wiped it off and continued to stir up pancakes. The pastor finished his story by saying, 'It kind of spoiled my meal.'

"I was given a New Testament that year when I was ten years old and read it from cover to cover. The next summer was our first out on the prairie and I'll never forget the huge prairie fire of 1911. I thought Revelation's description of the end times was here and the earth was going to burn right before my eyes. I sang 'My Jesus I Love Thee' over and over again.

"We didn't have wealth, but we had everything. We had enough even if it was mush and milk. It was good! Thanksgiving and Christmas were so special during those homesteading days. Jell-O cost five cents and Mother saw to it that we had it with cranberries and chicken. In those days we treasured even an orange.

"My parents were both Christians. God was there in our home. Dad one day bought an organ for \$5. I don't know how he had the insight to buy that for us. It was just magic and we worked at learning to play it. Now my eyesight gets the notes mixed up, but," Lucille chuckled, "I still play."

A new organ sat in her living room and I went over to see the hymnbook opened to "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" and across the page, "Be Still My Soul."

Lucille left home to attend high school and a course called "pedagogy" which qualified her to teach second grade. In 1917, she began her long and storied career as a country school teacher. Taking some years off to raise her six children, she retired from teaching in 1971.

We sat together at her kitchen table browsing through scrapbooks filled with clippings and notes — former students, whether they be age forty or ninety, expressing their love and respect for Mrs. Coffield.

Though Lucille's husband Hubert, passed away in 1962, she continues to live on their home ranch with four generations. She keeps busy with her 24 grandchildren, 51 great-grandchildren, and 4 great-great grandchildren. I noticed a stack of books. She said she had just gotten devotional books to give the confirmands at Slim Buttes Lutheran and was apologetic that she hadn't wrapped them yet.

We walked out to her garden, or what was left of it after this summer's grasshopper invasion. "Oh, I don't raise

as much as I used to," Lucille admitted. But she's still canning and her watermelon pickles are extraordinary!

A picture on her living room wall best describes Lucille's testimony and legacy she is giving to her family and friends. Just a week before, she received it as a gift from her granddaughter. It was pressed flowers from her garden with a Bible verse. "Grandma, it's the verse you underlined in my Bible many years ago," she exclaimed as Lucille opened the package.

*You shall love
the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.*

— Matthew 22:37

Driving out the long lane to the highway, my heart was filled with thanksgiving for the privilege of meeting one who has let Christ live His life through her for nearly a century. There can be no greater legacy to pass on to our children!





Timberland-Ringebu Free Lutheran Church of rural Barronett, Wisconsin.

Experiencing God's hand of blessing in a rural Wisconsin parish

— Pastor Tom Olson



Hosanna Free Lutheran, rural Cumberland, Wisconsin.

I am thankful for some things you might take for granted. At the Timberland Church I serve, I am thankful for:

- An office — I used to have my office in the church entry way where it was tiny, cold and the mice would build nests in my computer printer.
- Indoor bathrooms — we used to have to trudge through the snow drifts when it was below zero.
- Sunday school rooms — we were packed in the basement with only a curtain between classes.
- Running water and a modern kitchen — we used to carry water in buckets.

Two years ago it seemed impossible to think of such blessings. Even though the congregation had carefully saved money for over six years, the projected cost of the new building was just too much for our little church to handle. I clearly remember the night that our church council met in a little farmhouse for the meeting where we were to recommend to build or not to build to the congregation.

We wanted a few classrooms, a kitchen, a fellowship hall, bathrooms, septic system and running water. The projected cost was \$120,000. We only had \$60,000. We all wanted to build, there was no disagreement there. Each council member sadly voted out loud, "We can't do it."

It was going to be unanimous, until the last man to vote spoke. This retired army sergeant who was fairly new to our area looked up and said, "We must do it, the money will come in." We all knew he was right and spoke from faith. We voted and it was unanimous again — this time to build!

The building addition cost over \$150,000 even with much volunteer labor. But people gave, local people, former members and non-members. A 77-year-old retired carpenter from the Twin Cities donated an estimated \$8,000 worth of labor for the finest kitchen cabinets you could imagine. The building was dedicated on September 29, 1996 and our present debt on the 3,500 square foot addition is less than \$37,000. Praise the Lord!

The other congregation I serve, Hosanna Free Lutheran, was a new group meeting in the basement of a bank in the neighboring town. Even though the people gave their hearts out, this small group could barely cover my salary and the

basic expenses. They tried to buy an old, small church building for \$29,000, but the deal fell through. I was devastated but one elderly man comforted me and said he was glad he didn't have to climb all those steps on that old church anyway.

We went ahead and planned a very simple building. A local farmer who is not even a member came forward and donated an excellent piece of land. A few new people started attending. But the project could not get off the ground. We lacked experienced leadership in construction and we knew we had to build it ourselves because of lack of funds.

So we did what Pastor Paul Nash of the Home Missions Department told us to do. We stopped everything, fasted and prayed. In a couple of days I got a call from a semi-retired Baptist layman who happened to have a lake home near Amery Free Lutheran and attended there from time to time. He asked if he could help us build! God answers prayer.

We worked every Friday and Saturday last August and September. We worked hard and ate tremendous "thresher men's meals" prepared by the women of the congregation. We cut, hammered and painted. Workers came from our ranks, Amery Free Lutheran and area churches. After 27 days of volunteer labor, a \$35,000 church extension loan and many serious prayer meetings, we now have a beautiful little church two miles south of Cumberland.

Hosanna Lutheran had a workers' appreciation Sunday on October 13, 1996. People wept as they entered the lovely sanctuary. The old altar furniture from the closed Zion Free Lutheran in Willmar, Minnesota, looks beautiful. A special dedication service with Pastors Robert Lee and Paul Nash is being planned for December 1, 1996.

The good news of Jesus' salvation is still being proclaimed from the old pulpits of two small, rural churches. Many country churches in our area are sadly sitting abandoned. Thankfully, "Come Ye Thankful People Come" and "Joy to the World" will waft through the woods and over the frozen fields of Timberland and rural Cumberland this holiday season. We will be very thankful for Jesus — and running water, too!



Living in the shadow of His return

A call to prioritize

Witnessing is tremendously affected by the imminence of Christ's return. His return puts a time limit on the earth's life span and brings urgency to our witnessing. The Second Coming gives authority to our witnessing and a clear reason for it. It's why we need to spread the gospel. It's what makes it all worthwhile.

A trap many Christians fall into today is forgetting this world will one day end. We get caught up in planning for tomorrow and forget that the future for us as believers on this earth may be short. Matthew 24:28 says the end will come while people are carrying on as they always have and not expecting it to ever stop. Often it takes a terminal medical condition for us to realize how temporal is our time on earth.

Christ's coming again will be as a thief in the night. This makes sharing the good news of Jesus a priority. We haven't been given time to delay or a deadline to procrastinate with. God has us living in the shadow of His return so that we will realize the urgency of our mission.

The Resurrection is an indisputable fact because it gives validity to our faith (I Corinthians 15:14). In the same way Christ's return gives reason for our witnessing. God has not taken His Son from the earth and forsaken it. We would have no reason to spread the gospel if God were only Lord of the past. Since He is the everlasting Father of the present and the future, we have reason for keeping His commands (Revelation 22:12-13).

Jesus told us our main objective. Each Christian is given the authority to make disciples of all nations. We are the chosen means for spreading the Word. In this way, Christ has made His return the goal, purpose, and conclusion to our witnessing on earth.

Each day could be the DAY. We cannot delay. Life before the Second Coming is a constant reminder to prioritize our lives and be the witnesses that Christ has called us to be.

— Philip Watts
AFLBS Senior
Camrose, Alberta

Teaching our children to look forward to that day

"Daddy, what will happen to me when I die?" Those words still sting in my heart when I think back to that time when as a boy of about seven, I wondered about my own death in the darkness of my bedroom. I remember the stabbing fear that seized me as I lay in my bed. I remember too the soothing words of confidence in Jesus that my dad shared with me. I vaguely recall his prayer as I drifted into a calm, peaceful sleep.

Now I have children of my own and I look back to that time with a different perspective. With all my heart, I don't want my children to go through that same feeling of empty isolation and insignificance. With the next millennium quickly approaching, we see more and more clear signs that we are in the last days before Christ's return. An increased sense of anxiety can grip us and our children can be especially frightened. It's all the more reason to talk candidly with our children about our faith in Christ and share with them the realities of life and death as revealed in the Scriptures.

Paul shares with us encouraging words about the end of this life and our passing into the next.

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

— I Thessalonians 4:13-14

Death is not to be feared

We have a hope. Death is not the final end for those who trust in Christ. We believe in Jesus and as He was raised from the dead, we shall be also. What encouraging words for us to share with our little ones!

When we die, we go to be with Jesus

It is right for us to understand from this text that if Jesus is going to bring



— Pastor Randy Nelson
Faith Lutheran
El Campo, Texas

those back who have already fallen asleep in Him, they must be with Him beforehand. This is especially comforting for those of us who have loved ones who have already passed on — they are with Jesus and are happy with Him.

Jesus' Return is not to be feared

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.

— I Thessalonians 4:17-18

What a wonderful promise to stand upon as we see all these events rushing toward the Lord's imminent return. We as believers will spend eternity with the Lord!

A word of warning follows this text.

Now brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

I Thessalonians 5:1-2

The truth is that not all will be happy about Jesus' Return. We are therefore exhorted to be ready and have our own house in order. Each of us needs to be certain that we have placed our trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. We also must speak to our own children from their earliest days about Jesus and share with them the peace that comes from trusting in Him for our salvation.

Every day that passes is closer to Christ's Return. Let us hold fast to our hope and confidence in Him and encourage each other as we see the day approaching.



Working today, looking ahead

Through the ages, man has waited for the return of Christ. The apostles believed the Lord would come back in their lifetime, and surely the persecution of the early Church meant He would return soon. Christians who endured World War II believed this was certainly His time. I read today's paper and see those signs of the end times. Could Christ return by the year 2000? We don't know the day or hour, but we do know two things: we are called to be continually ready and we as a congregation have work to do!

Disparity exists between how we *should* be preparing for Christ's return and the way we really *are*. Is it possible that within our very own congregations are those who are not prepared and may even dread the Second Coming of Christ? Our mission as a congregation should be to ready those within the fold.

A good friend and I were recently talking of the return of Christ. After some time, he admitted he really wasn't ready for Jesus to return. He was anxious for that day, yet he wanted to first have an opportunity to get married, raise a family and become successful in his job. Are we looking forward to that day, but only on our terms? Being honest with ourselves and God, can we say we are personally and corporately ready for His return and preparing ourselves daily for it?

Certainly our congregations look ahead to eternity with Christ. But we always keep in mind we have work to do today.

The Thessalonian church had tremendous zeal for being blameless before Christ when He returned. Yet, Paul exhorts the church in his second letter to not be idle in their anticipation of the Lord's return. The Lord would have us living our lives in daily watchfulness, busy doing His work.

In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) many anticipated the bridegroom's coming but were not prepared. They believed sincerely they were to be received in the party, only to be disappointed and to miss out entirely.

For the grace of God

that brings salvation

has appeared to all men.

It teaches us to say "No" to

ungodliness and worldly possessions,

and to live self-controlled, upright

and godly lives in this present age,

while we wait for the

blessed hope —

the glorious appearing of our

great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

— Titus 2:12-13

— Kermit Nash

Solid Rock Lutheran

Osseo, Minnesota

This reminds us that evangelism is more than reaching out to those who have never heard of Christ and His victory on the cross. Often the most difficult one to reach is the one who is in the local congregation. Part of our ministry is leading to Christ those who know of Him but do not know Him personally. I have heard and must agree that one of the largest mission fields in America is the Lutheran church. We must prepare ourselves, prepare our families, our brothers and sisters.

While we encourage one another to draw near to God, we become more united as the testing of our faith becomes more frequent and intense. Testing will come. First Timothy 4:1-2 and Second Timothy 3:15 tell us of signs of His return. We must be on guard (Mark 13:9). Paul instructs us in I Timothy 4:13-16, on how to train ourselves for daily life and the times which are coming.

I have a sign which occasionally used to hang on the wall at work. "Due to the present work load, the light at the end of the tunnel will temporarily be shut off." Each of us in our congregations has a deadline. We know the work that must be done today while we look forward to the light at the end of the tunnel. Christ implores us to be as a city on a hill, not hidden in the darkness. His light is becoming increasingly bright. Our congregations together are called to be harvesters of those within our grasp.

God be with us as His return approaches!



God is at work in Eastern Europe

Much of what God is doing in Eastern Europe is hidden and invisible. Like the leaven in the bread (Matthew 13:33), the Spirit of God is working under the surface. In some people He is creating conviction of sin and the need of a Savior. In others, He is creating a curiosity and hunger for the living Word of God.

There are, however, many visible evidences of God's work. For example there is Graig Kveen. A 1988 graduate of AFLBS, Graig traveled to Poprad-Velka, Slovakia in August of 1994. The theme of the trip was, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men" from Mark 1:17. He met two students fishing in a stream flowing from the beautiful High Tatra Mountains. After establishing a

friendship with them, he shared the gospel and kept in touch with them. God used his witness to start one young man on the road to new life. Now, after countless meetings with our special brother and sister Pastor Jozef and his wife Luba, this young man is here in the U.S. with Graig. He is in Bible School this fall and is considering becoming a missionary.

Steve and Ann May are missionaries in Petrozavodsk, Russia, where they are starting a Christian Center in Public School #1. Last June, ten of us Americans joined them in hosting an evangelistic language camp. Seventy students and 10 teachers came. Few, if any, had any knowledge whatsoever of God or His Word. Yet they came to school from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The Russian teachers were very skeptical at first. From experience, they knew these kids would never open up or respond. They were amazed to see how these students responded to love and affirmation and how they were freely speaking English, reciting Bible verses in English and singing Christian songs by the

end of the week..

Just this last July, 33 people gathered for an Evangelism Training Conference in Presov, Eastern Slovakia. I was thrilled to see their diligence as they spent many hours each day listening to lectures, discussing and praying. The most exciting part was perhaps the day they received training in communication. By custom they are very reticent to talk to strangers — a habit wisely observed during the long years of communism. But after this training they took to the streets and were seen all over the city talking to strangers and sharing the Word of God with them.

A couple of months earlier, I had met Peter and Katie on a train in Slovakia. It turned out they were from the city of Presov. I told them I would visit them when I came in July for the conference. I did. We had a two and a half hour evangelistic Bible study. Former Catholics, they are now reading the Bible and seeking to find a living and real relationship with God. I continue to share the gospel with them by letter and will visit again when I return to Presov.

Further evidence of God's working in Eastern Europe is a slow but growing recognition that

Pray for Mexico — It's a time of opportunity in the midst of difficulty in Mexico. The economic crisis has cut wages in half four different times. Coupled with the effect of the current drought in the northern states, life for the average Mexican has become much harder. People are anxious and rumors abound of the spread of violence. Pray that as people lose confidence in the government and the economic system, they will find a new trust in Christ.

Central America has gone through tumultuous changes in past years. The effect of wars, natural disasters and social upheaval has broken down walls of resistance to the gospel. Through the efforts of large evangelistic organizations and local churches, this region has seen a dramatic turning to Christ. Pray for the effective training of national leadership and for a greater missionary vision among the Christians in these countries.



Attendees at last summer's annual conference of the Central Mexican Lutheran Church held at St. Andrew's in Leon.

the old structures of worship and organization will need to be adapted to allow for the far more dynamic expressions of praise, worship and service of young Christians. One bishop is encouraging people to develop new liturgies and forms of worship. In other places some traditional members feel personally threatened by such ideas. Tension will grow as the new meets the old, challenging the Christians to keep their eyes on Jesus and strive to be of one mind.

The continued political and economic uncertainty in Russia is, I believe, forcing the people to recognize that they cannot depend upon human political or social contrivances for their security. They need to find God and the strength and security He gives to help them in the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves today.

The challenge to us as Americans is twofold. On the one hand it is to not allow the comforts of life in America to deafen us to the call of the Holy Spirit as he summons people to participate in a small way in building His Church in Eastern Europe. And second, it is to recognize that we do not have some superior wisdom for the Christians there but are called to offer the gifts and experiences He has given us to share.

Please pray:

- that the people God is calling will have the courage to say "yes" regardless of the cost.
- that East European Missions Network (EEMN) will remain sensitive to God's direction and faithful to the objectives of helping rebuild the Church in Eastern Europe.
- that the Christians in Eastern Europe who are seeking to obey the Great Commission in their countries will be able to adjust to the new reality of freedom.

— Pastor Don Richman
Bloomington, Minnesota

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

You're in my prayers

The envelope contained a collection of cards that were each entitled "You're in My Prayers." Opening them, I discovered that one of our congregations, Calvary at Arlington, South Dakota, had distributed them at their midweek Bible study with the encouragement to address them to someone for whom they were praying. Each one also included the portion of Scripture to which they were responding, II Thessalonians 3:1-5, which begins, "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored"

One of the blessings for which I thank the Lord this Thanksgiving season is people who pray for me. It is not uncommon for me to receive a note or a phone call including the welcome news that someone is remembering me before the Lord. During these past four years as your president, this has been a constant source of encouragement. Some of my prayer partners have gone to be with the Lord, and He has raised up others to take their places.

There is a greater blessing, however, than the knowledge that people are praying for us. Isn't it wonderful to know that we have a prayer-answering God! The Bible verses which were mentioned above also include the powerful message that "the Lord is faithful" (V. 3), which gives us confidence when we come to Him with our petitions. Luther's explanation to the Lord's Prayer begins with these words: "God thereby tenderly encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father and that we are truly His children, so that we may boldly and confidently come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to their dear Father." What a welcome!

There is another blessing, also, which we understand only in part. The Word of God tells us that we do not know how to pray as we should, "but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (see Romans 8:26-27). It is good to know that Christian friends pray for us, and even better to know that God answers prayer. But I surely find it far beyond my comprehension to consider the comforting truth that the Holy Spirit of God Himself prays for me.

When others remember us in prayer, we are reminded to pray for them, too. What shall be our response to the fact that God intercedes for us? I know of no other way than to humbly thank and praise Him, living a life that pleases Him.

We are so unworthy of all His blessings. Jesus Christ is our worthiness, and the door is wide open for us to come to the Father through Him.

Wishing you all a Thanksgiving filled with the joy of past blessings remembered and new blessings received.

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

Youth Notes

Tips to try

I have been asked what does a youth group meeting consist of. No two groups run the same, but most groups have some combination of these five elements:

① Games

These can be a time to just unwind and let the youth have fun, or they can have some real purpose. The game time is an opportunity to bring your group of various backgrounds together for one purpose or goal. It can be a unity building time or a chance to teach the lesson that is planned for the night in a hands-on type of approach. Example: a lesson on evolution, and the game time includes drawing a detailed picture in the complete dark and/or forming an object out of play dough. Don't blow off your game time as unimportant.

② Music

Music time is very important to our youth culture. They are constantly listening to music. It is a strong teaching tool we can use. One group that was slow to start singing used music from cassette tapes and copied four songs onto a blank cassette before the meeting. With the music turned up and the words on an overhead, the group slowly began to join in with the songs.

Music can be taught in several ways. Try reading the text of hymns. Play a popular song and discuss the message. Listen to a Christian song with thought-provoking lyrics. Point out the message in the praise songs you sing as a group.

③ Teaching

If all of your meetings are based on activities, or music, or discussion, you will find the youth will never grow spiritually. Our culture is constantly changing and we need to learn from the one source that does not change. God's Word offers that stability.

Remember also that your group may not be able to swallow 50 minutes of solid truth. It is probably better for them to get one truth from several different angles and then allow them time to consider how that one truth could get put into practice in their lives. Sometimes they will learn the most when they study the Scriptures for themselves. One group began the teaching of a parable by acting it out. Each had to have a part in the skit. After the lesson was done, **they remembered what they had been taught!**

④ Discussion

It can be easy to teach about a topic, but most people need time to apply that teaching to their own life. A discussion time of "How does this affect me?" offers that opportunity. In discussion groups of four to five, there will be an opening up that will not take place in a group of ten or more. It is only after you find out the real issues a person faces that you can have a significant impact on their life.

⑤ Prayer

Group prayer can be a scary thing. It will take creativity to develop a group that does not

Upcoming

Youth Leaders' Retreat
January 17-19, 1997
Association Retreat Center
Osceola, Wisconsin

For all youth workers,
volunteers, parents,
and pastors.

It's the AFLC Youth Ministries' first annual (almost FREE) Youth Leaders' Retreat. Register with Pastor Kevin Olson at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; (612) 545-5631, FAX 545-0079; e-mail hqmail@aflc.org. The cost is \$10 before January 1, 1997. After January 1 it is \$20.

pray, into a group united in conversation with God. Asking for prayer requests and then getting volunteers to pray for those requests has worked the best for me. It is really amazing to watch the unity and intimacy develop as youth pray for the real prayer concerns of their friends.

Just like our personal prayer life, group prayer life can become stagnant. Different prayer topics, and prayer positions can help keep that variety. Ideas: kneel in prayer at the altar of your church to develop a sense of reverence and awe in talking with God; use the different names of God to lead a time of prayerful adoration of who God is; have a time of confession with a candle lit in the center of a circle; or spend one prayer time just thanking God for all He has done.



— Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

New librarian and secretary at AFLTS

Louise (Udden) Burton, Minneapolis, begins her new work as the AFLTS librarian and secretary on December 2. Her husband, Peter, has been a guest

instructor of Greek at the seminary. Mrs. Burton fills the vacancy left by Vrenda Bengston.

Basketball teams in Dallas tournament

On November 6, the AFLBS men's and women's basketball

teams drove to Dallas, Texas, to play in the SAGU tournament. Their opponents included SW Assemblies of God University and Arlington Baptist College. The teams returned to Minneapolis on November 10.



Raitis Evanois, Latvia, is studying this year at AFLTS. He joins eight Junior and Middler seminarians.

AFLTS gets AAL grant money

AFLTS has received \$7,000 in grants from Aid Association for Lutherans. A \$2,500 grant provided an opportunity for pastors and lay pastors to enhance their education through the Institute of Theology held July 28-August 8. The remaining amount was used for student financial aid and faculty development.

AFLC Schools receive Lutheran Brotherhood funds

AFLBS recently received \$675 from Lutheran Brotherhood's member matching gift program. The latest payment matches eight gifts from LB members made during the second quarter of 1996.

AFLTS received \$750 through matching payments from eight gifts during the third quarter of 1996. Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT and IMPACT Plus program matches members' gifts of \$25-\$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher learning.



Bible school students enjoyed the early fall evenings playing softball at the beautiful Medicine Lake campus.



Seminarian Marshall Nessa, (center) met with the National WMF officers last September to discuss his plans to continue his year of internship in Curitiba and Campo Mourao, Brazil. He concludes six months of internship at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota, at Christmas. He and his family are scheduled to depart from Minneapolis the end of December.

The promised presence

Many blessings too numerous to count! Yes, God has been good! Exodus 33:14 has been our confidence and testimony this year: "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest." As real as it was to Moses, so God's promise and presence has been to us. What a joy to begin with His promise and serve with His presence!

God's presence has been real as He has *preserved* us from danger as we traveled our weekly circuit holding classes and attending various conferences. He kept us from harm as we left the road at an unexpected diversion in the highway. He preserved us from illness in our experiences of diversity of climates and meals.

God has shown His presence in *timing*. We've sensed the hand of God upon us to speak to individuals at specific times so as to communicate what was not always easy to say to the hearer. He led us to be on time to lend a hand for a project or to get someone to a medical facility or to simply be available as a listener. God's timing was always right.

We are greatly encouraged by

the interest and participation in the extension seminary classes. God's presence was demonstrated in our *obeying* His call to teach. We've seen an increasing number of students and so many are doing well in comprehending the various courses studied.

We have experienced God's *goodness* when He touched the body of Crecenio. He was strong enough to walk three hours in the mountains to attend the annual conference of the national church and another three hours out to catch a ride home. In May we wondered if he would live after serious hemorrhaging from an advanced case of hepatitis.

How can we but praise our God who goes with us! Then there were the English-speaking Lutherans in Puebla who welcomed us into their fellowship and at the same time found out that their pastor of eight years was accepting a call to California. So there we were and began helping during the interim. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

— Pastor Richard W. Gunderson
Puebla, Mexico

Missionary Sonja Dahl, was commissioned as an AFLC missionary at a service on November 10, 1996, in her home church, Jevnaker Lutheran near Borup, Minnesota. She is scheduled to leave for Brazil shortly before Thanksgiving.

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson moved from the ARCA near Curitiba, Brazil, where they worked while the Paul Abel family was on furlough, and are now in Campo Mourão where they will minister while the Dyruds are on furlough. Their new address is Caixa Postal 44, Campo Mourão, PR 87300-970, BRAZIL.

Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and family plan to leave Minneapolis, Minnesota, on December 29, 1996, to begin another term based at the ARCA near Curitiba, Brazil. A post office box closer to their home has been secured. The address will be Caixa Postal 579, Campo Largo, PR 83600-970, BRAZIL.

Luverne, Minnesota — The Lutheran Mission Societies "Alaska Mission" held its 75th Anniversary Conference in Luverne on September 6-8, 1996. This inter-Lutheran mission has worked in Alaska with fishermen's missions, children's homes and church planting. The focus today is on Bristol Bay with a church in Naknek, a preaching point in South Naknek, and a radio station, KAKN, which reaches out to summer fishermen and year-round residents. Several AFLC pastors and wives attended the Saturday evening "King Salmon" Banquet. AFLC Pastor Tom Olson, Barronett, Wisconsin, was elected president of the mission, succeeding AALC Pastor Paul Weikert, Frost, Minnesota. Pastor Olson would love to talk to anyone interested in the Alaska Missions work and those who would like to get the mission's newsletter.



Leon, Mexico — Pastor Milton and Chelo Flores and their new son at last summer's annual conference of the Central Mexican Lutheran Church. Pastor Flores serves Gethsemane Lutheran in Celaya.

Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud, Campo Mourão, Brazil, expect to return to the U.S. before Christmas for their year of furlough. They will be based in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Their four children are in Minnesota: Shannon is in St. Cloud on a teaching fellowship while working on her Master's Degree in English as a second language; Christina is studying in a dental hygiene program; Victoria is in her last year at Northwestern College and Chester is taking classes at North Hennepin Jr. College.

Oceanside, California — Community Bible Church held special meetings on October 19-22 with Home Missions Director Paul Nash speaking. The California wild fires caused a power outage and the last night's service was held in candlelight.

Metropolis, Illinois — Faith Lutheran, a newly formed congregation, recently voted to affiliate with the AFLC. Metropolis is near the Ohio River bordering Illinois and Kentucky.

Coon Rapids, Minnesota — Maranatha Free Lutheran is praying that the proposed purchase of their first property and church facility will be completed shortly. Maranatha is a Home Missions congregation and has been using rented facilities.

AFLC Summer Ministry Teams — The Bible School and Home Missions Department are preparing for next summer's ministry teams. They have a need for either full-size or mini-vans. Perhaps you can donate a new or used van? If you are planning to request a team for your congregation or camp, please do so immediately. Contact Pastor Paul Nash, Director of Home Missions or Pastor Jim Johnson, AFLBS Dean, at (612) 545-5631.



Glens Falls, New York — Pictured is the Faith Lutheran congregation at the installation service of Pastor Daniel Uzupan. Faith Lutheran was one of six congregations joining the AFLC this past year. Glens Falls is near Lake George, north of Albany.

AAL honors new Lutheran congregations

Two AFLC churches celebrating their first anniversary this year have received a special \$1,000 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL). The funds are to be used for a special purpose that will support the ministry of a young congregation, such as establishing con-

gregational libraries, planning outreach strategies, conducting special music programs or matching member gifts to worthy causes. The two AFLC congregations are: Abiding Word Lutheran in Melbourne, Florida and Faith Lutheran of Glens Falls, New York.

Loveland, Colorado — On October 27, Lutheran Church of Hope started a new outreach with a Kids' Bible Club at a community center in an area where last summer's BARN-ABAS team canvassed. Church members noticed that no one from that area was coming to Sunday School so they said, "Let's go to them." The youth group is teaching and using skits for the every other Sunday afternoon club. Twenty-one children attended the first session.

In the spirit of Matthew 6:3-4, an anonymous donor has given a gift of \$100,000 to AFLC Home Missions, designated for the building program of Lutheran Church of Hope in Loveland.

Home Missions Director Paul Nash made the announcement to the Loveland congregation on October 31, 1996. "It puts it in reach," Pastor Larry Haagenon commented. The congregation is looking at a 3.5 acre lot that a developer has set aside for a church. "What can one say when your congregation receives a gift like that ... except to give all glory to God!"

Large contributions of this kind are a tremendous encouragement to the work of AFLC Home Missions, and make it possible to provide assistance to struggling congregations without the burden of debt. To arrange a contribution, contact the Home Missions office at (612) 545-5631.

I pray for them

Oh Father, today five new souls have been baptized into your family. Thank you for answers to many prayers. May they continue in the joy of knowing you. May they cling to you in faith when there is no joy in their hearts. May their faith grow strong and never waiver. May they be known as men and women after your own heart.

They are human Lord, and as David and Moses and many others before them, they might stumble. Father, I pray in those times that your Holy Spirit will show them their sin. May they confess it and renounce it on a daily basis. I pray that they will be continually sensitive to you.

"Protect them by the power of your name ... so that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11). Defend them from Satan, so that they will not be distracted from you.

Father, I know that times of testing will come. I pray for strength to endure and wisdom to see the choices to make.

"Make them holy by the truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17). As they read your Word and study, imprint it on their hearts to protect them from those who don't know you as Savior who would draw them back into the world.

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Set them apart spiritually so that they will reflect your love and glory to the world around them. Preserve them from disputings that will drive unbelievers far from your Word.

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29). Lord, during times of suffering may they remember you and stand firm in their faith in you, whatever befalls them. During the good times when there seems no need to depend on you, may they continue to stand.

Give me patience, Father, to see what fruit you are growing. Still my mouth from correcting dress, hair style, language You have sent your messenger to do that in their hearts. Remind me that there is only one Holy Spirit, and I am not He. May their hearts ever be open to the Holy Spirit's prompting.

I will pray for others that you will reach them your way. Thank you for these new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let me hear with my heart the lessons you have for me. May I hear and do your will.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

— Mrs. Lois Grothe
Bethany Lutheran
Astoria, Oregon



PEOPLE AND PLACES



Brandon, Minnesota — Chippewa Lutheran celebrated their 125th anniversary on August 11, 1996. AFLC President Robert Lee gave the morning sermon. After a catered noon meal, the afternoon service was a "Time to Remember and Share." Pastor Jerome Elness, Superior, Wisconsin, a son of the congregation, reminisced about his growing up years at Chippewa and his years of ministry. The congregation has worshipped in their church building since 1885. They joined the Lutheran Free Church in 1897 and in 1963 became a member of the ALC. In 1978, they became a member of the AFLC. Pastor Tony Stockman serves the congregation.



Bethany Lutheran, Broadhead, Wisconsin.

Broadhead, Wisconsin — Bethany Lutheran celebrated the 125th anniversary of the church on September 22, 1996. Organized in 1844 as Luther Valley Lutheran Church, some members decided to form another church closer and thus Bethany was founded and built in 1871. They still worship in the historic facility. Twenty-one other AFLC congregations join Bethany in worshipping in a facility built before 1900, the oldest being Fox River Lutheran in Sheridan, Illinois, which was built in 1862.



The historic Bethany Church. The handmade pews came from the old Luther Valley Church made in 1847. The 24 kerosene bracket lamps and a kerosene chandelier are still used on special occasions. There are 216 members today. Thirty-five families boast the name of Olson or Olsen.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Prayer Shield on the Internet

The AFLC Prayer Shield, established in 1993 as a part of the AFLC-2000 project, is now available to those with internet access as a part of the AFLC home page on the worldwide web.

Pastor Frank Cherney, Tucson, Arizona, will be editing the listing of prayer requests and answers, updating the material on a biweekly basis or as special needs arise.

The URL for the AFLC page is: <http://www.minn.net/aflc.org>.

Lake Alma, Saskatchewan

— On October 13, 1996, Pastor Jim Winter was installed as the pastor of Faith Free Lutheran. Pastor Gene Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, president of the AFLC in Canada, officiated. Pastor Ken Wilsdon of Calgary opened the service with prayer and Scripture reading. The WMF served a traditional Thanksgiving feast after the service. The Winters began their work at Lake Alma in August after returning from their second short-term missionary work in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

Camrose, Alberta — Solid Rock Free Lutheran is another step closer to having their own house of worship. The Camrose City Council approved the church's offer to purchase a parcel of land. Meanwhile the congregation is having new people coming to worship and joining the church family while they continue to meet at the Charlie Killam School.

Pastor Robert Giles, Laveen, Arizona, is serving as the interim pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Tulia, Texas.

Pleasanton, Texas — Pastor Harold Reitz is serving as the interim pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania — Ruthfred Lutheran women's circles held their annual Thanksgiving Offering at a covered dish brunch on October 26. The circles are each named after a Bible woman. A representative from each circle dressed in Bible-time attire and visited from table to table introducing her circle and encouraging any non-members to consider joining. Missionary candidate Sonja Dahl was the guest speaker. It was voted to send 75% of the offering to AFLBS and 25% to Sonja Dahl.

Spokane, Washington — New Vision Lutheran hosted the West Coast Fall WMF Rally on September 21. About 40 ladies selected two of four seminars to attend: 1. "Children as a Mission Field" — Ruth Wagley; 2. "Effective Prayer for Missions" — Lori Crowell; 3. "Practical Methods for Serving Missionaries" — Janice Baldwin; and 4. "Bring God Home" — Barb Moland.

Edinburgh, North Dakota — Grace Free Lutheran hosted the Eastern North Dakota District WMF Fall Rally on October 5. The theme was Philippians 2:9. Speakers were Pastor Harvey Jackson, Hatton, North Dakota, and Sonja Dahl, missionary to Brazil. One hundred five attended.

Pastor David Abel, formerly of North Royalton, Ohio, has accepted a call to serve a congregation in Phoenix, Arizona, beginning November 1, and is transferring to the clergy roster of another denomination. He has also been named National Director for Evangelism Explosion III — Hispanic USA, to help develop this ministry among Spanish and Portuguese-speaking churches in this country.

WMF Memoriams

Ethel Ranger, Fargo, ND
Evelyn Priebe, Sebeka, MN
Gordon Lundemo, Roseau, MN
Laura Rorback, Shevlin, MN
Jelita Dallager, Greenbush, MN
David Forsberg, Marysville, WA
Lillie Aker, Watertown, SD
Gladys Pladsen, Spicer, MN
Mabel Graalum, Valley City, ND
Agnes Benda, Pukwana, SD
Helen Lunde, Goodhue, MN
Gladys Berg, Zumbrota, MN
Margaret Frislie, Greenbush, MN
Hevig Gilles, Ashland, WI
Annie Lilja, Bruce, SD
Ellen Amundson, Bruce, SD
Lena Espeseth, Winger, MN
Richard Blestrud, Tioga, ND
Ruth Kvilhaug, Tioga, ND
Ida Walla, Fergus Falls, MN
Edna Melseth, Ferndale, WA
Martha Lockridge, Ferndale, WA

DeKalb, Illinois — The Illinois District WMF met at Grace Free Lutheran on October 5. The theme, taken from Psalm 1:3, was, "Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life." The morning program was led by Shira Christian and Treva Mathre from Helmar Lutheran. Mary Greven from West Lisbon Lutheran, was the afternoon Bible study leader.

Ray, North Dakota — Beaver Creek Lutheran WMF recently honored Mrs. Ara Hartsoch for 50 years of service.

Hymnals for sale

Concordia Hymnals — Badger Creek Free Lutheran has 52 hymnals for reasonable sale. Most of them are in good to excellent condition. Make an offer by calling (218) 528-3238 evenings or weekends.

Augustana Hymnals — black, 1925, \$2 to free plus postage. Very usable. Call Norm Backstrom at (612) 545-6584 or 546-7307.

El Campo, Texas — South Central District pastors met at Faith Lutheran for their annual pastors' conference on September 30 and October 1. Pastor David Barnhart of Melbourne, Florida, conducted evangelistic meetings at Faith Lutheran concurrently with the conference. In addition to the scheduled sessions, the pastors were able to teleconference with AFLC President Robert Lee, Missionary Dan Giles and Pastor Gordon Waterman from Tomball, Texas. Scheduled district activities for 1997 include a Women's Retreat on January 17-18, at Lake Whitney near Fort Worth and the Annual Family Camp on July 14-18, at Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Northome, Minnesota — Funeral services were held at Hope Lutheran on September 27, for Henry Elhard, long-time member and Sunday school superintendent. He was the publisher of the *Northome Record* for 45 years, retiring in 1977. He continued to write his weekly column for the nearly 20 years since his retirement.



Grafton, North Dakota — Pictured are the children attending Bethel Free Lutheran's Vacation Bible School this past summer.

Fairdale, North Dakota — Aadalen Free Lutheran observed its 110th anniversary with a Norwegian-English worship service on September 22, 1996. Pastor Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, North Dakota, delivered the sermon in English but much of the rest of the service was in the Norwegian language. Aadalen has conducted an annual Norwegian service for more than thirty years with many guests attending from the region.

Pastor Dale Radke, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is providing interim service for Bethany Lutheran Church, Broadhead, Wisconsin.

Mrs. Avis (Philip) Dyrud, Middle River, Minnesota, is the newly appointed member of the Parish Education Board, serving until an election can be held at the next annual conference. She is filling a term created by the resignation of Mrs. Barbara (Rodney) Stueland, Roseau, Minnesota.



Roseau, Minnesota — On September 8, 1996, Rose Free Lutheran held their Fall Festival and burned the mortgage on their addition built in 1993. AFLC President Robert Lee was the guest speaker. Audrey Jensen shared the history of Rose con-



gregation. Pictured are Keith Johnson, Thomas Halvorson, Pastor Lee, Kenneth Broten and William Starren. Pastor Larry Severson has served the congregation since 1981.

1997 AMBASSADOR schedule

Given below is the 1997 schedule for *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Please make each issue an item of prayer. Also, note the deadline and special emphasis for each issue. If you have an article idea or an interest in writing for a particular issue please contact the editors.

<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Editor's Deadline</u>	<u>Special Emphasis</u>
January 7	November 29	Evangelism
February 4	December 31	AFLBS & AFLTS
February 25	January 17	Lent
March 18	February 7	Easter
April 8	February 28	Finances
April 29	March 21	Pre-Conference
May 20	April 11	Health & Fitness
June 10	May 2	Children & Youth
July 1	May 23	The Poor
August 5	June 27	Conference Review
August 26	July 18	Sunday School
September 23	August 15	Grace
October 14	September 5	Missions — Home & World
November 4	September 26	Reformation
November 25	October 17	Thanksgiving & Advent
December 16	November 7	Christmas

Bold is for the 24 page issues.

Eddie Britz, Houghton, Michigan, has been called to Christian Free Lutheran Church in Wheatland, Iowa, to serve as a lay pastor for six months. He will work with Pastor Tim Carlson who has served Christian Free Lutheran since 1989.

Pastor Michael Peterson, Whitestown, Indiana, was recently appointed by the Coordinating Committee to serve until conference on the Christian Academic Education Board, filling a vacancy created when the person elected at the last conference declined the position.

Pastor Larry Severson, Roseau, Minnesota, is receiving chaplaincy training to serve the Roseau community in their new hospice program. He is being trained by Chaplain John Rieth of United Hospital in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

*And my God
shall supply all your needs
according to His riches
in glory in Christ Jesus.*

— Phillipians 4:19

Ottawa, Illinois — Faith Lutheran hosted a Reformation Rally on October 27. The afternoon began at 4 p.m. with the Illinois AFLC District Annual Meeting. At the evening service, Pastor Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, North Dakota, was the guest speaker. Pastor Dalager continued at Faith for their special meetings through October 30.

Arlington, South Dakota — Calvary Free Lutheran is hosting four "Saturday Nights Alive" events this school year beginning on November 9, followed by January 11, March 8, and May 10, 1997. Youth are invited from eastern South Dakota and beyond. AFLC President Robert Lee and an AFLBS team presented the program on November 9.

Greenbush, Minnesota — United Free Lutheran hosted the Northwestern Minnesota District Youth Rally on October 19. Pastor Vern Baardson, Fargo, North Dakota was the featured speaker on the theme, "Take the Plunge!" Pastor Baardson was the guest speaker at United Lutheran for their special meetings from October 16-20.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - October 31, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$241,472.00	\$19,600.82	\$161,873.51	67
Seminary	122,626.00	9,717.68	68,483.09	56
Bible School	184,696.00	14,200.86	121,715.73	66
Home Missions.	253,270.00	19,245.64	153,351.47	61
World Missions.	341,257.00	38,878.22	308,838.65	91
Capital Investment	24,639.00	872.23	11,856.59	46
Parish Education	49,289.00	4,214.48	34,943.54	71
Church Extension	15,018.00	370.32	6,969.14	46
TOTALS	\$1,232,267.00	\$107,100.25	\$868,031.72	70
TOTALS 1995	1,484,851.00	105,844.38	873,230.41	59
Goal 83%				

Thankful for time spent in God's school

I wondered at times if I was ever going to get out of school. When I was a freshmen in college, four years of classes and studying seemed like an eternity. A similar kind of feeling came upon me when I began seminary. "My life will be half over by the time I finish," I thought. Then when graduation came it was almost a surprise. "Is it over already? Where did the time go?"

I am more thankful for my years in school now than I was when they began or when they were happening. Looking back, the value of the time is seen more clearly and the length of time does not seem so great. It is and will be similar with our time in God's school.

Walking through this life with God is an ongoing learning experience. Some days the instruction is more intense than others. At times we are taught specific lessons that are painful and difficult to grasp. We wonder why the time of training has to go on and when it will end. We think we have learned the lesson well enough, but God continues to teach.

As we look back at times of trial we can often see that they were times of training. While in the midst of them those times seemed so long, so difficult, so meaningless. When we look back at them, however, with eyes that have been opened by God, we see lessons that were learned and instruction that was given.

Our gracious Instructor knows how difficult a lesson we can handle. He stretches us, but never gives us a challenge that is more than the strength He provides. He is a "hands-on" Teacher. He does not desert His students. He graciously cares for us and guides us throughout the learning process.

In the beginning of the book of Exodus we read about Moses who thought, as a young man, he was ready to lead the people of Israel against the Egyptians. God knew he needed to spend some time in school. Moses goes into the wilderness and spends forty years as a shepherd. They were not always easy years. Feelings of regret must have come upon him. The tempter undoubtedly came, trying to convince him that his life was a waste and his existence was pointless. Those years of hardship and

wondering were not a waste, however. They were forty years of training and preparation for the task God had for him to do.

Much of the book of II Corinthians consists of Paul, under the inspiration by God, talking about what he has learned from his experiences in God's school. In the midst of troubles he received comfort that he could share with others (1:4). Hardships taught him not to rely on himself but on God (1:9). Being hard pressed, perplexed and persecuted demonstrated to Paul his weakness and also God's all-surpassing power (4:7-9).

Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. It tormented him greatly. He pleaded with God to take it away. Instead God let it remain and used it as a tool for teaching. Paul learned unforgettable lessons about the sufficiency of God's grace and His perfect power (12:7-10).

Peter wrote to people who were persecuted for their faith in Christ. Their education was difficult. They "had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (II Peter 1:6,7, NIV). In the midst of the struggle they could take heart. The Instructor was at work.

For some of you the past few months may have been difficult ones. The season of suffering may still be going on. As you look back and look around, trials are seen much more clearly than reasons for giving thanks. With God's help may we see the training that is going on for which we can give thanks.

Let us also look ahead and see that school will soon be over. Jesus is coming again. The lessons that are now learned with tears will be no more. Growing will no longer be accompanied by pain. As we look back the time of training will not seem so difficult nor so long. We will be given more insight into the value and meaning of it all. And then, the reasons for thanksgiving, which surround us now, will abound even more.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**As we look
back at times
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God's harvest

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

— II Corinthians 9:6,10,15

For another year harvest for the most part is over. Farmers and gardeners have, as God has prospered, reaped the results of what was planted months ago. Farmers, trying to anticipate what might be in short supply and thus bring a better price, planted accordingly. While the return may not be what was desired, it was consistent with what was planted both as to type and quantity. Corn planted resulted in corn harvested. No more than a hundred acres planted resulted in no more than a hundred acres harvested.

There was in the world of humanity, because of Adam's sin, such a shortage of righteousness that God found it was absent altogether. In Genesis 6:5 we read, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on earth had become, and that every inclination of the thought of his heart was only evil all the time." The psalmist speaks of God looking down from heaven and seeing everyone corrupt, everyone lacking righteousness (Psalm 52:2-3). The world was a wasteland. Mankind could produce nothing that God would consider holy.

The absence of righteousness and the helplessness of mankind moved the God of love and grace to intervene and work for the

salvation of His lost creation. "He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene, so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him" (Isaiah 59:16). He promised to pour out righteousness upon the earth like rain (Isaiah 45:8), and that righteousness would spring up on the earth like vigorous sprouts in a well-tended garden (Isaiah 61:11).

God's promise to pour out righteousness was connected to the promise of a Messiah who would rule in righteousness. More than just ruling in righteousness or bringing in righteousness, the Messiah would be the righteousness as Isaiah prophesied: "This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." All the promises of God to pour out righteousness were promises to send a Savior.

In His effort to bring forth righteousness, God did not sow sparingly. He sent a Seed that was so powerful that it could resist all the diseases of this sin-cursed earth. The Seed was not only able to survive the hostile climate, He was able to disarm and triumph over all the enemies by the cross (Colossians 2:15). *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift* (II Corinthians 9:15).

God, through His Word, works

to bind us to that triumphant Seed so that we may share in His victory. "He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (II Peter 1:4).

When we have been bound by faith to that Seed, God works within us a daily separation from the world of sin and a reliance on the Seed sent. This discipline of God is "for our good that we may share in His holiness. It produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:10-11).

What a privilege and honor it is for us who in ourselves are chaff, to be included in the harvest of righteousness that God is producing.



— Pastor Bruce Dalager
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota