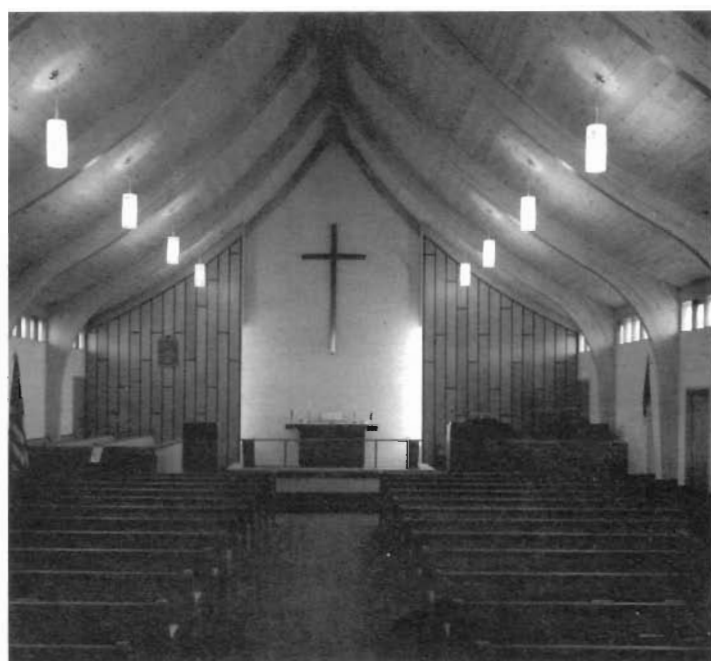


# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

November 4, 1997

## What difference does it make?



Why I am  
a Lutheran

What's the  
difference  
anyway?

What is worship  
in light of  
the Reformation?

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 4, 1997  
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## 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 righteousness of God which makes us acceptable to Him is the whole meaning and purpose of the Christian life. That righteousness is found in Christ and not in us.

We get this righteousness *from faith to faith*. Paul piles it on to emphasize faith in this verse. While it is certainly true that good works are important and needful in the Christian life, the focus in the matter of salvation and righteousness before God is faith. He could hardly have given it more prominence.

Does he do this to make a theological point about the nature of salvation? Yes. Is that all? No. He makes a point about faith to set at peace the heart of the sinner.

Salvation is from first to last received by faith. Salvation or justification by faith excludes our work and our effort. This is the key to a life of peace with God. We cannot find peace in what we do or do not do. Not because these are unimportant things, but because faith alone makes Christ's universal atonement a personal asset.

On the cross Jesus bled and died for all humanity. Every sin of every person from the beginning of history to the end of time was laid on Jesus as He suffered. Jesus has made universal atonement. This great salvation must then become personal in each life. Salvation is from first to last, received by faith. The need for faith is never outgrown. Faith never becomes obsolete.

This is Paul's point when he

emphasizes faith; not just a theological point, but comfort and peace for the sinner. We are all tempted to bring our goodness into the issue of salvation and God's favor. When things go well in our Christian growth we begin to think that we are now at last the kind of people God wants us to be, that He is pleased with our works. Yes indeed. He is pleased with our works. But not because of their quality, not because they are done so well that God has to accept them. We **never** reach that point, we never become perfect.

Isaiah writes, "All our righteousness is as filthy rags" (64:6). God gladly accepts the good works of His children who believe in Christ simply because they believe. It is not the quality of our works that please God, but the fact that the worker believes in Christ. When we trust in Jesus as our Savior, all our works, from the well done to the weakly done, are acceptable to God. Yes, righteousness is from beginning to end a work of faith!

The carnal Christian who is spiritually lazy will surely abuse these truths. That does not change their truth one bit. God has made it clear in His Word that the only righteousness we have is the righteousness of Christ received by faith. That righteousness is fully sufficient. Praise be to His holy Name!

— Pastor Steve Mundfrom  
Bethany Lutheran  
Sebeke, Minnesota

## sound bites

**1** “Never before in the history of the Christian Church have so many believers suffered and been persecuted for their faith. Tragically, beatings, imprisonment, kidnappings, rape, and murder are increasingly commonplace in countries hostile to the witness of Christianity. And a watching world remains strangely silent.”

— Terry Madison

“Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith.’

**4** Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

— Martin Luther

**2** “One reason for studying the biographies of those who have come before us in the family of faith is that it reminds us that we ourselves are not sufficient — that we need one another in the greater body of Christ.”

— Timothy George

“I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever **a monk** got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, readings and other work.”

— Martin Luther

Nearly two thirds (64 percent) of those who read the Bible more than once a week said they feel joy all or most of the time, a figure that is nearly twice that of those who read the Bible less than monthly.

— Survey commissioned by Tyndale House Publishers

**6** When Luther said his first mass, he was “utterly stupified and terror-stricken” at the thought of standing before the Almighty God.

# Why I am a Lutheran



— Myron Berg  
*Our Saviour's Lutheran*  
*Dickinson, North Dakota*

## **I.** The Lutheran church proclaims the message of forgiveness in Christ to believers.

We need assurance of forgiveness to have a relationship with God. Without that assurance, we will either attempt to flee from God by blocking Him out of our minds, or we will develop a small, false view of Him that will not threaten us. As Isaiah found out, the only way we can stand in God's presence is with the assurance that God has taken care of our sins.

God promised Adam and Eve that a Savior would come to redeem them from their sin. This promise was spread through generations of believers until the nation of Israel was commanded to establish blood sacrifices for sin. These sacrifices were merely a reminder of what was to come — a living Savior.

Christ's death ended the repetition of sacrifices for sin with a one-for-all event. But, the human heart has not changed, and forgiveness still needs to be declared on a regular basis to us, even as it was proclaimed to believers before the time of Christ.

In many churches, forgiveness is only proclaimed at the time of someone's conversion or when someone specifically confesses to a certain sinful act. But, I am always in need of forgiveness not only for my sins, but because I am a sinner. In Lutheran churches, the consistent emphasis on forgiveness should encourage a fellowship on the basis of the forgiveness in Christ.

## **II.** The Lutheran church presents the law and gospel in balance.

The themes of law and gospel run throughout the Bible. Luther and Lutheran theologians clearly teach the correct handling of the Bible using these truths.

Those who say that a personal relationship with Christ will automatically create this balance do not grasp the greatness of Christ. He is the perfect and holy God. His perfection bears down upon our conscience through His amazing creation,

through His example of how a life could be lived -without sin, through His work in other believers who are gifted and strong in areas where we are weak, through His convicting Holy Spirit, and through the preaching and reading of His Word.

The depth of mankind's fall into sin needs to be considered also. Job had a very good relationship with God, but when the devil created terrible conditions for him, he questioned God's goodness. If we were to be pushed beyond a point, our pride would cause us, also, to sin by questioning God's goodness. Christ's holiness and our depravity will combine to drive us from Him or cause us to set up barriers between Him and us if the presentation of the law is not balanced with the gospel of forgiveness.

### **III. The Lutheran church presents salvation more than conversion.**

We believe that a person who is living a life in rebellion and in hatred to God needs to be converted to a life of love for God. To many churches with a non-Lutheran theology, salvation means only a conversion experience and the gospel only means the invitation to accept Christ. The Lutheran church teaches a deeper meaning of these terms. Gospel is the message of forgiveness in Christ, and salvation is a life lived in the forgiveness of the cross.

### **IV. The Lutheran church presents a scriptural plan for teaching our little children salvation.**

In many churches, salvation can only be obtained when the mind is capable of intellectually comprehending the spoken message and the will is in sufficient control to be able to yield itself to that message. Because of this view and the Bible's teaching that even little children have a sinful nature, they have great difficulty in

understanding their young children's relationship to God.

Since a Lutheran believes that salvation is more than just conversion, and is a life lived in the forgiveness of the cross, it is not hard to believe that this forgiveness and salvation can extend to children. A child may hear the name of Jesus, the Savior, even before birth. After he is born, he can be brought to baptism to receive the forgiveness offered there. As he is being brought up, he can learn how Jesus wants him to live and how to talk to and listen to Jesus (the law) and that Jesus forgives him when he sins (the gospel). Thus, the great commission of making disciples by baptizing and teaching a life of salvation is followed.

### **V. The Lutheran church gives the correct meaning to the sacraments.**

The Bible regularly speaks of baptism and communion in connection with forgiveness of sin. Because we can put on Christ through these sacraments, God sees us as if we had never sinned. Those of other theologies who believe salvation is only conversion will not be able to understand how someone could receive salvation through these acts. But to us who see salvation as a life lived in the forgiveness of the cross, they are another means to receive this gift. Because of the physical contact that occurs during these sacraments they can impress the forgiveness of the cross upon us even more than the spoken word alone.

### **VI. Epilogue**

Even though important differences exist between the Lutheran church and other churches as indicated, I appreciate what I gain by associating with those churches and their members. I owe so much to the Lutheran church, but it is sad to see how masses of Lutherans worldwide are ignoring the great spiritual resources available to them in the Lutheran faith. Let's pray for revival in the Lutheran church.



# What's the difference anyway?

**“W**hat's the difference anyway?” That's the question from many people when the subject of history of theology comes up. They ask this supposed rhetorical question shortly after their eyes begin to gloss over.

“After all, Jesus is what really counts.” Amen! If you don't know Jesus, these things don't matter. But that does not mean they are without value. Especially in light of this



past summer's votes by several Reformed denominations, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal church on altar and pulpit fellowship. So glossy eyes or not, we need to know the differences.

Four hundred and eighty years

ago this “All Hallowed Eve” (October 31), Martin Luther nailed his challenge to debate on the church door in Germany. This signaled the start of the Protestant Reformation and became the springboard for other reform movements, such as: Reformed — Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Anabaptist. Space does not permit a complete examination of the groups who emerged, but let's look at the first two.

## The Reformed churches

They began under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli. He, like Luther, held to the creeds, baptism and communion as sacraments, salvation by grace alone, and the authority of the Scriptures. Both were against the teachings of purgatory, indulgences, veneration of saints, monastic vows, etc.

However, Zwingli's reforms were more legalistic. He believed that if Scripture did not sanction something, it should be done

away with. Luther taught that if Scripture did not forbid something and it was beneficial, it might be retained. Zwingli did away with church art, music and furnishings. His reform was very authoritarian and theocratic; with the church over the state. There was little tolerance of religious differences. And Zwingli was willing to spread and protect the gospel by force. He died in battle against Catholics.

The main doctrinal difference between Luther and Zwingli was that Zwingli felt it was against reason to believe in the “real presence” in communion. The real differences were in spirit and practice. Luther relied on prayer, not the sword; on the power of the Spirit working through the Word rather than political authority and compulsion of individuals; on Scripture alone rather than reason.



Zwingli, 1531



Calvin, 1550

When Luther and Zwingli met at the Marburg Colloquy, Luther, while recognizing Zwingli as a Christian brother, stated, “We are not of the same spirit.”

After the death of Zwingli, John Calvin came into prominence among the Reformed. He was gifted with an orderly and logical mind, which he used to define and systematize Reformed theology. He instituted the Presbyterian form of church government. His theology heavily emphasized that God is sovereign, rather than Luther's emphasis on God's grace. Calvin widened the theological differences with the Lutherans by his teaching that God, purely by His own sovereign will, had predestined some to salvation and the rest to damnation (double predestination). The Reformed faith spread to Scotland, France, Germany and Holland.



— Pastor Don Voorhees  
St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran  
Nysted, Nebraska



## The Anglican or Episcopal church

This movement began as a political move by Henry VIII of England to rid himself of the Pope's influence in England. Henry simply put himself in the place of the Pope, as head of the English Church. He made little or no reforms in the Church of England. With the succeeding monarchs, reforms were initiated and then repealed, depending upon whether the monarch was Protestant or Catholic. Finally Queen Elizabeth forced the two sides to compromise in the formulation of the Thirty-nine Articles. The English Church became a hybrid between Catholic and Protestant — their theology more Protestant as influenced by Scotland's Calvinism, and their worship and hierarchy more Catholic.

So what is the significance of the recent vote in the Lutheran church to share pastors with several Reformed groups? Have the Lutherans and Calvin-

ists found doctrinal unity, or at least can agree to disagree? Or is theology no longer important and now can take a back seat to organizational unity? Are the traditions and the polity the significant concerns?

Yes, the reformation churches did waste time and effort debating one another when they could have emphasized their common ground to the furtherance of the gospel. But this union is not the answer. Luther stood on the *Word Alone* over four hundred years ago, and there is a difference today. Without the Word — there is no gospel!



Henry VIII, 1538



**A New Springtime**, Robert Lloyd Lee, Heirloom Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 161 pages, (\$9.95, paperback; \$14.95, hard cover).

We all need a greater sense of history. From where have we come? What factors have influenced the present? Well has it been said that the past is prologue. Some of us love history, some of us don't, but we all need to know more of it.

Pastor Robert Lee has done us a great service in putting together this book which, he tells us, is a "substantial revision" of his 1987 Th.M. thesis. It is about the revival in the 1890s among Norwegian-Americans, the decade in which the Lutheran Free Church was born.

No one living now remembers that revival from experience, but there are those who have seen the effects of it at quite close hand and perhaps heard Pastor Peter Nilsen or Edward Brekhus preach, for both lived well into this century.

My own sainted mother told of hearing Pastor Nilsen and O.M. Anderson, also mentioned in the book, preach. Evangelist Anderson was God's instrument in mother coming back to the Lord in young womanhood.

Pastor Lee writes of these men, as well as others, such as L.O. Skrefsrud, missionary to India, Elias Aas, E.M. Broen and O.M. Bakke. Accounts are given of the revival and its effects in a number of congregations and communities. The revival began and continued in a time of difficult, sometimes bitter, church conflict. Some churches split and some of the new congregations became members of the emerging Lutheran Free Church, major antecedent of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

What happened in the revival? Christians were revived and renewed. Sins were confessed. Relationships were healed, and in some cases strained when people did not understand God's working in relatives and other acquaintances.

Many out of fellowship with Christ were convicted and turned to the Lord. There was a great hunger for fellowship in the Word of God and prayer both in the revived and the newly converted.

Pastor Lee lays the foundation for all this by giving a brief picture of the revival in Norway under Hans Nielsen Hauge and in Sweden under C.O. Rosenius. He follows the emigrants to the U.S. and writes of the work of Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal.

But you will have to read the book itself to know the whole story. It is told simply and in a way everyone can follow. Find out the author's eight conclusions concerning the revival of the 1890s. Pray God, can our generation see a similar moving of the Spirit of God?

— Pastor Raynard Huglen  
Newfolden, Minnesota

(Order **A New Springtime** from the AFLC Parish Education at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55441.)

# What is worship in light of the Reformation?

Part of the joy of being a Lutheran is the participation in services dedicated to worshipping God. Worship can be dynamic, changing, and full of life or repetitive, stale, and dead. Our great God is indeed worthy of praise and it is a sacred privilege to glorify Him together. A truly Lutheran service relies upon the Word of God and directs the worshipper to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Congregations unfamiliar with the heritage of the Lutheran Free Church or the AFLC might wonder about the low liturgical emphasis in many of our congregations. Some might even dismiss our services as not being Lutheran at all. To better understand the AFLC and the position of the early leaders of our church, we need to understand their position from an historical and a biblical perspective.

The early immigrants from Norway who started the Lutheran Free Church considered the higher forms of liturgy as unnecessary and distracting from the presentation of the gospel. While they were not against a liturgy which presented the basic format of a Lutheran service, they wanted God to be honored and the gospel preached in such a way that the Holy Spirit could bring souls to saving faith. The stiff formality of the State Church was rejected for a dignified yet simpler service which would emphasize

the preaching of the gospel. There was a recurring message regarding the worship services and that was the admonishment from I Corinthians 14:40 that all should be done "decently and in order."

Over the centuries it has been debated as to who is really a Lutheran and what should be considered a Lutheran style of worship. Considering the wide variance of styles of worship in the sixteenth century church, it would be next to impossible to prove what would be any "original" Lutheran style of worship. Even if a particular style or format could be chosen, the wide range of practices from Lutheran churches in many different countries over the past 500 years should also be considered.

Much has been made that Luther did not want to eliminate the Mass, but merely to reform it so that it would be more compatible with Scripture. A review of the orders of service used by our sister Lutheran churches would reflect a great deal more liturgy than what many use in the AFLC. Are they then, more "Lutheran" than we, or might there be some other considerations which ought to be examined?

Luther made his first reform of the Mass in 1523. He eliminated the offertory and the canon because they "reeked with sacrifice." Those early services were still conducted in Latin although the hymns were sung in German. Within the next three years, Luther changed the entire service to German. Changes in the service continued throughout the centuries. At times the church service tended to be much more liturgical and at other times the service became so informal that it lacked any recognizable liturgy.

Rather than worry about the liturgy, Luther was especially concerned with the preaching of the Word of God. From a purely practical point he directed that the sermon should not go over an hour. If the focal point of the service is the preaching of the Word, then the challenge is to develop biblical and edifying sermons. The service which has a five minute message does not really have a sermon. All of the right liturgy and the wearing of beautiful vestments will never substitute for the preaching of the cross.

For Luther, worship and preaching were all about the gospel. Yet that gospel message of the Reformation is the one aspect most sorely neglected in many



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



# Summer teams experience blessings

On Sunday, August 24, 1997 a homecoming barbecue was held at the home of Pastor Paul and Laurie Nash in honor of the AFLC Bible School summer teams — Ambassador, Barnabas, Nehemiah, Majesty and Cornerstone. The evening was co-hosted by Jerry and Terri Nelson, AFLBS music director and his wife. The evening featured a time of sharing, singing, praise and reflection, along with thanks to God for His protection. A special communion service concluded the evening.

During my summer on the Midwest Barnabas Team, I could see God's working in the lives of children. One of the most encouraging things I saw was His effect in the hearts of children from unchurched homes.

During the week in Janesville, Wisconsin, I had a boy in my class

who said his parents never went to church. I could tell he had a real desire to learn about Jesus. He said, "When I get older, I want to go to church regularly so that I can catch up on what I missed."

— John Miller

Our Southern Barnabas Team spent a week at Anadarko Bible Camp in Oklahoma. The Lord was there in a very real way. We saw kids respond to the gospel in a way we had never seen before. The Barnabas Team was the camp counselors in the dorms. Seven young people accepted Jesus into their hearts during that week. Many more made rededications and some made life-changing decisions. God was working in dramatic fashion. It was so encouraging for us as a team to see the harvest, and not just be planting seeds.

— Jeremy Nelson

Because of the time spent with the Barnabas Team, I am truly starting to learn how to be content with whatever He gives me — even trials. Philippians 4:11-12 has become my goal. There were times during the summer when I wished I had a helper for my class, or that I had my own bed, or even that my team could be somewhere else. I began to realize these little trials were God's way of making me into the person He wants me to be. It all depends on how I react to them.

— Shawn Danielson

Our Summer Servant Team was a first for the AFLC youth department. We trained with the Lutheran Brethren Church in Barnesville, Minnesota, for our one week of leading a VBS. Before our VBS began in Northome, Minnesota, we canvassed in six area communities. Though we had our challenges, we all want to do it again next summer, Lord willing.

— Sarah Keller

(continued on next page)

Lutheran services. Services which only offer condemnation over sin and list all of the things we must do are merely repeating the law. While the law has its purpose, the gospel alone saves us. The very fact that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead is the good news which needs to be repeated and heard every service.

A portion of a sermon preached by Luther in 1515 illustrates the point: "Whoever wants to read the Bible must make sure he is not wrong, for the Scriptures can easily be stretched and guided, but no one should guide them according to his emotions; he should lead them to the well, that is the cross of Christ, then he will certainly be right and cannot fail."

Worship services also contain other important elements although there may be some variance as to which of the responses or traditions are used. Some of the key elements used in most Lutheran services include a confession of sin, abso-

lution, creed, prayers, and music. Just think of how even one of these parts, the Apostle's Creed, unites the church and glorifies God. Worshipers today would be overjoyed if they could, but for a moment hear, what God hears, as millions of believers repeat together what they believe is true about the Triune God in many languages, in country churches and in great cathedrals.

Aside from all the differences in the thousands of Lutheran services used on any given Sunday, the truly Lutheran service is to emphasize that it is Christ alone who redeems us. The believer is to be pointed to Calvary and the authority of God's Word. May it always be the goal of our congregations to let God be honored and adored in every worship service.

To Him alone be worship and praise!



## SUMMER TEAMS

☀ Our society is pushing a lack of connection between those who are young and those who are old. The mature Christian has little time or opportunity to share his God-given wisdom and experience so necessary for spiritual maturity of young friends.

Our church and youth department are to be commended for sending out to our churches spiritually mature young people who bridge the gap between young and old. An example of that is the Barnabas Team who took over the Vacation Bible School program for Immanuel Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri.

It's a blessing for a congregation to use such teams. These young people do not betray our youth, but teach and live before them a spiritually mature life.

— Pastor Vince Will  
Springfield, Missouri

☀ The Nehemiah Team of the Association of Free Lutheran Bible School dedicated its entire summer of 1997 to helping restore normalcy to the upper Red River Valley following record-setting flooding last spring. Community members, completely worn down by the flood fight, cleanup, and recovery process, were overwhelmed and overjoyed by the energy and enthusiasm which the team brought to the area.

Community members' needs were spiritual, physical, and emotional in nature, and the team played a role in meeting them all. They were involved in Sunday morning worship and taught Vacation Bible School. They rolled up their sleeves and cleaned, painted, repaired, hauled, organized, and did anything else that was needed — all in excess of what could have been asked of them. And they became friends of all they helped, making the power



**Brazil FLY Team** joined with the Brazil AFLC Bible School students in Campo Mourão for a program at an area school for their "Cultural Week" last June. The American and Brazilian students handed out hundreds of tracts and the gospel was well received. Pray for the Brazil Bible school students as they study and seek God's will for their lives. Pastor Oseias Camara works at the Bible school along with Missionary David Nelson.

☀ The summer of 1997 is one I will never forget. I had the privilege of working with five other students cleaning up the flood-damaged homes and businesses in the Grand Forks area. Through the odd jobs we did, (ranging from hand-cleaning 600 pairs of eye-glass frames and lenses, to operating a jack hammer) the Lord totally changed my attitude in many ways — especially towards work. Recently I have found myself longing for some hard labor.

— Trevor Tungseth

of their Christian witness even greater.

The biggest joy we received was the *peace of God* they gave to us by helping and being with us. We pray the Lord's blessing on them each day. They will not be forgotten in our lives.

— Patricia and Ray Kiner  
Christ the King Lutheran  
East Grand Forks, Minnesota

**Heidi Quam, McIntosh, Minnesota**, and a 1997 AFLBS graduate traveled to Brazil with the FLY Team. She remained in the Curitiba area where she is helping the Paul and Becky Abel family. Becky Abel wrote, "We sure enjoy her here and wonder how life could go on without her. She is learning the language quickly and has been a real blessing to our family." Heidi expects to return to the States later this year.

☀ After the flood, I called my friend. She was not doing well. Her basement had been emptied and sanitized but all of her belongings were out on her lawn. Enter the Nehemiah Team.

They showed up on a hot day and began washing. They scrubbed pieces of silver, hung clothing, sorted through books, and scrubbed some more. It was a long day and the work was tedious. The only sounds I heard from them were sweet sounds: "We're here to help. I'm glad we can do this."

It was not only their actions that blessed, but their attitude as well. Whenever I was with them last summer, I found myself having fun despite the labor. They truly are a part of my heart and I treasure their friendship.

— Judith Konerza  
Christ the King Lutheran



**AFLC new board members** began their terms at the all-boards' workshop. Pictured are Pastor Stephen Odegaard, Tioga, North Dakota, on the World Missions Committee; Wallace Klein, McMurray, Pennsylvania, on the Stewardship



Board; Larry Behne, Lowden, Iowa, on the Schools' Board of Trustees; and (right photo) Pastor Tom Tuura, St. James, Minnesota, on the World Missions Committee.

**Roger David**, an attorney with the State of Illinois who is also a lay pastor, is assisting with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Illinois. Their first service was on September 28 with 68 people present.

**Church organ available** — Trinity Free Lutheran Church at McIntosh, Minnesota has an older Hammond Console organ to give to anyone who needs it. Contact the church at Box 276, McIntosh, MN 56556.

**Pastor Craig Johnson**, formerly of Eugene, Oregon, has begun his new ministry in planting a mission congregation in the Portland, Oregon area. His new address is 9580 SW 146th Terrace, Apt. V1, Beaverton, Oregon 97007; phone (503) 579-5009, fax (503) 590-2810 and e-mail [craigj@teleport.com](mailto:craigj@teleport.com). Pastor Johnson continues his ministry as editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

*Some call flood and other natural disasters "acts of God." This may or may not be true, but one thing is for sure: what the Nehemiah Team did in the upper Red River Valley last summer most certainly was an act of God.*

Christ the King Lutheran will never be the same after the flood of April 1997. For two weeks volunteers, including Pastor Alan Arneson with workers from his parish in Badger, Minnesota, put the church basement back together in even better condition than it ever was.

In May, the church ministered to the community by adding showers in the basement bathrooms and converted a classroom into a utility room with washer, dryer, refrigerator and freezer.

The council made these decisions in faith, assuming they would have to cover the majority of the expenses. However, God had something different-planned. Checks began to pour in and as of September, the congregation has received over \$60,000 in gifts.

The church basement also became the temporary facility to a home daycare provider. During the summer the congregation became aware of a preschool and kindergarten that needed a new home beginning in September. King's Kids Early Learning Center is already filled to capacity of 80 children — 40 at the facility at one time.

On September 21, 1997, Christ the King Lutheran hosted King's Fest '97. This was a celebration marking the start of Sunday school, a welcome to the King's

**Amy Greene**, Grand Forks, North Dakota and 1997 AFLBS graduate established her candidacy for future World Mission Prayer League service before leaving in October, for one school year in Chad, Africa. She is serving as a tutor and nanny for Missionaries Bill and Rachel (Mundfrom) Chesley, Wycliffe translators.

Kids Early Learning Center, and a time to thank all who ministered to the congregation through the past months.

— Pastor Dan Klug  
taken from his 9/8/97 letter to  
members and friends of  
Christ the King

## PEOPLE AND PLACES



**Campo Mourão, Brazil** — Pictured is the new isolation wing being added to the Miriam Infant Home. Funds for the project are being provided by Global Health Ministries.



### STEER, Inc. celebrates 40 years

On October 3-4, 1997, STEER, Inc. marked 40 years of serving missions at their annual conference in Bismarck, North Dakota. LaRue Goetz, Executive Director, recently wrote, "I believe that as of January 1997, we turned the corner of the livestock and grain markets. UNIT sales that are now coming in from across the country are much improved over a year ago. The next few years certainly appear to be brighter. My major concern is that God will continue to lay the burden of world missions on the hearts of new farm/ranch people to want to use STEER."

STEER, Inc. raises money for 80 mission organizations around the world through donors who give to the STEER UNIT Program and the rancher/farmer who cares for the Lord's cattle and God's Acres Projects in over 30 states. Last year, nearly \$8,000 was given to AFLC World Missions. This is 19th out of eighty mission organizations receiving STEER, Inc. funds.

For more information on how you can participate in this unique mission program, contact the AFLC World Missions office at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441, (612) 545-5631; or STEER, Inc. at P.O. Box 1236, Bismarck, ND 58502, (701) 258-4911.

**Ferndale, Washington** — Sunday night, September 21, was a night many at Triumph Lutheran Church will never forget. They were joined by fellow believers from the Russian congregation in Ferndale for a potluck meal with both American and Russian cuisine. The ladies scrambled to find tables for the crowd of over 100 people.

After the meal, they met in the sanctuary for a service that lasted two hours. They enjoyed traditional Russian music and sang several familiar hymns together. The Russian and English language blended beautifully together. Pastor Yuriy Golovin brought greetings and shared about his country of Tahikistan. A former missionary from that country also shared and challenged the congregation. The evening ended by gathering in small groups to pray for Tahikistan.

**Valley City, North Dakota** — Grace Lutheran is hosting an evangelism conference during November 14-15, as a result of the Ignitor Conference held last June in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Their theme is "Our Mission Through the Son." Faith Lutheran in Shakopee, Minnesota is planning a similar conference during November 21-22.

**Pastor Edward Strom**, Appleton, Wisconsin, has accepted the call from the Kenyon, Minnesota parish (Hauge and Emmanuel congregations) and will begin his ministry there on November 1. Pastor Strom, who has served parishes with the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Minnesota, North Dakota, Illinois, and Wisconsin, was approved for call in the AFLC after colloquy with the Coordinating Committee.





Vision 2004 was presented to the all-boards' workshop at the ARC on September 23, 1997. Pictured are Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Vision 2004 Director and Board of Trustees Chairman, David Borg of Cokato, Minnesota.

## Vision 2004 Update

### Be a partner in prayer *from the ground up!*

We're starting at **ground zero** and ask you to join us. As we find ourselves in the early stages of development in Phase I of Vision 2004, we have so much for which to praise God.

- Word of God
- Students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Our property
- Our AFLC
- Lives that have been changed and continue to impact the world around them.

Most reassuring is the continued desire by the board and faculty to **remain consistent in purpose** — offering biblical studies to *ground* students in the Word of God.

We emphasize the word *ground* — it's the basis of our project in all ways! *Ground* as a noun is defined: land, base. We're eager to see equipment moving the earth around here! As a verb, it means to establish, instruct. The godly faculty and staff are teaching and modeling the Word in truth and purity, inviting the Holy Spirit to be the divine Teacher.

My guidepost as Project Director for Vision 2004 is, *Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it* (Psalm 127:1). I want, and pray that we all want, to move ahead with expansions here at our schools that are in accordance with what God wants. I praise God for what He is doing. It is fantastic to see all of the students here this year, and to look forward to even more next year. Praise God, we are bursting at the seams!

I look forward to staying in contact with you through this publication, and really lean on you to support the project in prayer through all the phases. Specific prayer requests are:

- Selection of an architect
- Dealing with the City of Plymouth
- Raising of the building
- Wisdom for the Schools' Board of Trustees
- Guidance for me as Project Director

If you have questions, concerns or ideas, please call me, at (612) 544-1194.

— Pastor Tonnes Pollestad  
Vision 2004 Project Director

**Tucson, Arizona** — Living Faith Lutheran will celebrate the burning of their mortgage on Sunday, November 23. They are also hosting a special Thanksgiving dinner that day for friends from Triumph Lutheran in Nogales, and Body of Christ Lutheran in Tucson. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles will be the guest speakers for the day's events.



**St. Joseph, Minnesota** — Pictured are Gary (Slim) Hartgers and Pastor Gary Skramstad of Redeeming Love Lutheran Church. Slim has driven his charter bus for the AFLBS annual spring Choral Club tour for the past 12 years. He came to know Christ as his personal Savior through the testimonies of the singers and their director, Marian Christopherson and Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, last spring's tour speaker. Later this last summer, Slim's wife came to know Christ and together they joined Redeeming Love Lutheran in September. According to Pastor Skramstad, "The Hartgers are what every church is looking for. They are at church every time the doors are open and always willing to help."



## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Barronett, Wisconsin** — The Lutheran Mission Society ("Norsk Ungdom" - Alaska Mission) held its 76th Annual Convention at Timberland Ringeby Lutheran Church during September 12-14. Pastor Tom Olson was re-elected to his second term as president. The mission has the KAKN Christian radio station, Naknek Lutheran Church and the South Naknek Mission in southwestern Alaska. The board voted to call Pastor Tom Olson to replace Pastor Curtis Nestegard, who has overseen the work for 30 years. Pastor Nestegard will travel on behalf of the mission to raise support and awareness of the work. The board also voted to call a full-time missionary to South Naknek. Perhaps you may be the one to go?

On September 28, Pastor Olson resigned as Pastor of Timberland Ringeby and Hosanna Lutheran parish in order to accept the call to pastor the two congregations in Naknek and oversee the radio ministry. He expects to begin his new work next June.

**Pastor Joseph Schultz**, Deshler, Nebraska, rode his bicycle on the Old Oregon Trail 70 miles through Jefferson and Thayer counties on October 17. He is the pastor of Abiding Word Lutheran Church which is planning to build their first facility beginning next spring. Pastor Schultz took pledges to raise money for his congregation's new building. The pioneers who went West to what they considered the new Eden, carried two books. One was the Bible and the other was the writings of John C. Fremont, the explorer who mapped the trail in 1842. Pastor Schultz also carried a pocket Bible and a map on his ride for Christ, His Church and the Abiding Word congregation.



**AFLC President Robert Lee** led the all-boards' workshop last September at the Association Retreat Center. The day's reports from the various AFLC ministries point to open doors and encouragement in all directions. Pastor Lee teaches one course in each of the AFLC Schools this fall semester.

**Norman Olson**, 84, Willmar, Minnesota passed away on September 29, 1997. He was an active member of Green Lake Lutheran, Spicer, Minnesota, and had served on the AFLC Stewardship Board. He is survived by his wife, Phyllis; four children, 11 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.



**Pastor Hubert and Emy DeBoer**, Moorhead, Minnesota, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on September 6, 1997, at Maranatha Free Lutheran in Glyndon, Minnesota.

**Pastor Clair Jennings**, 75, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, passed away September 23, 1997. He was an instructor at the AFLC seminary during the first year of the school as well as the founder of King of Glory Lutheran in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Among his survivors are his wife, Aune Marie, three daughters and a son, Pastor Craig Jennings, Minot, North Dakota, also a former seminary and Bible school instructor. Interment was at the Negaunee Cemetery in Negaunee, Michigan, with Pastor Herb Franz officiating.

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - September 30, 1997

| FUND                         | TOTAL<br>Subsidy      | REC'D IN<br>SEPTEMBER | TOTAL REC'D<br>TO DATE | %<br>TOTAL |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| General Fund . . . . .       | \$279,330.00          | \$15,071.71           | 147,117.10             | 53         |
| Seminary . . . . .           | 113,300.00            | 7,247.85              | 63,419.02              | 56         |
| Bible School . . . . .       | 142,509.00            | 6,889.54              | 75,288.48              | 53         |
| Home Missions . . . . .      | 257,432.00            | 14,054.91             | 133,588.81             | 52         |
| World Missions . . . . .     | 341,000.00            | 23,593.44             | 244,263.02             | 72         |
| Capital Investment . . . . . | 19,000.00             | 554.00                | 9,690.76               | 51         |
| Parish Education . . . . .   | 56,517.00             | 2,770.33              | 37,783.952             | 67         |
| Church Extension . . . . .   | 14,813.00             | 246.84                | 13,457.82              | 91         |
| <b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>      | <b>\$1,223,901.00</b> | <b>70,428.62</b>      | <b>724,608.96</b>      | <b>69</b>  |
| <b>TOTALS 1996 . . . . .</b> | <b>1,232,267.00</b>   | <b>72,242.19</b>      | <b>760,931.47</b>      | <b>62</b>  |
| <b>Goal 75%</b>              |                       |                       |                        |            |

## Only God can do it

**M**artin Luther didn't plan the Reformation. He was simply speaking out regarding areas in which he believed the church was operating contrary to God's Word. He was not plotting how to become one of the most influential men of the millennium. His idea was not to turn the church and much of the world upside down. The plan was not to begin a new denomination. He was just sharing what he believed to be truth and hoping to see a little bit of change.

God had much bigger plans.

The revival in New England in the 1700s was to Jonathan Edwards very unexpected and inexplicable. He titled his book describing that period, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and Neighboring Towns and Villages*.

It was surprising to people, but planned by God.

Bill Hybels says he did not set out to build one of the largest and most influential churches in America. He was just wanting to reach unchurched people for Jesus.

And God did something big.

God's work is often surprising and inexplicable. He is not a computer where we can push a button and know what will result. We do not control Him. We work as He tells us to work. We watch Him at work with amazement. We worship Him with awe. We give up any expectation that we can figure Him out.

It is wise to study times in history, such as the Reformation and times of awakening and revival, when God worked in unique and powerful ways. It is good as well to look around us at individuals and groups that God appears to be using and blessing greatly, such as Billy Graham and his crusades, Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Church, and the Promise Keepers movement. We can learn, but as we do we keep in mind how God works.

The hymn writer declares, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." Why did God use a simple German monk in the 1500s, a New England preacher with a rather dull speaking style in the 1700s and a North Carolina farm boy in the 1900s? Only God knows. He chooses "the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; ... the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ... the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one

may boast before him" (I Corinthians 1:27-29, NIV).

Who and what God chooses to use, He uses. When He chooses to work in unique and powerful ways, He does. It is grace, an undeserved blessing, that He uses anyone, and that He works at any time.

I am in the beginning stages of working with a group in the planting of a new AFLC congregation in the Portland, Oregon area. We plan and come up with ideas. We read books and get advice from experienced people. We could do it just the way folks who planted what became "megachurches" did it. Does this all guarantee great success? No. What is going to happen is going to be determined by God. "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:9, NIV).

We could achieve success in the world's eyes through our own effort, but we are hoping for much more. We desire success in God's eyes. For that to happen, God must bless and be at work. He has chosen us to bear lasting fruit, but for that to happen we must remain in Him, for apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:4, 5, 16).

We cannot plan and bring into existence a great work. We depend on God to do a great work. Does this mean we do nothing, that we are mere spectators? No. Each one who is in Christ is a part of the body of Christ and is

given a gift to be used in His kingdom work (cf. I Corinthians 12). God has work for each of us. But what ultimately results from that work is up to God.

That truth is humbling. When good fruit from our work is visible we cannot sit back and think we made it happen. God could have certainly done it without us.

It reminds us what must be our source of confidence. Reading the books, attending the seminars and sharpening our skills is good and should be done. But all that can be done and no fruit result if God is not in it. Doing a work for the Lord that is significant begins with prayer and God's Word and dependence on Him, and not ourselves.

Studying the surprising work of God in the past encourages us. The Lord delights in using ordinary people like us to do extraordinary things. Who knows what He might want to do in us and through us when we make ourselves available to Him? Let's find out!

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**The Lord  
delights in using  
ordinary people  
like us to do  
extraordinary  
things.**

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SOMETHING TO SHARE

## Learn from the Master

Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well at Sychar is a masterful example for us in effective evangelism. I have noted six elements in Jesus' approach to this woman. We will cover three of these elements in this article.

### 1. Be obedient to God's leading.

John 4:4 tells us that Jesus "needed to go through Samaria." The average Jew side-skirted Samaria on his travels between Judea and Galilee. But Jesus, besides not having such prejudices, was compelled in His spirit by what has been called a *divine necessity*. In some way, Jesus was conscious of a special need for His ministry in Sychar on this occasion — and He was obedient to that call.

Similarly, God at times impresses on us His will for stepping forward faithfully to an opportunity for sharing our faith. We will be more fruitful when we determine to be obedient on those occasions when we are given such promptings in our lives.

### 2. Be pro-active in initiating and leading conversations.

This is not an encouragement to be inappropriate or obnoxious. However, often it is unlikely that conversation will either get underway or lead toward spiritual things if we take no part in initiating it or guiding it. Note that with this woman Jesus not only introduced conversation (v. 7) but He was also the One to lead their discussion toward the woman's deepest needs (v. 10ff).

Often a simple greeting in an elevator, or an airplane, at a ball game, or when you are at the park with the children, will begin friendly interaction. Then, look and pray for natural opportunities to reflect a spiritual dimension of the issues under discussion. We don't wish to attempt forcing doors open, but our words can often be just the invitation someone needs to talk about spiritual things or to reveal his or her particular needs.

### 3. Be creative.

See the Master at work with

this woman, relating His desire for a drink to her need for *living water* which can become a *fountain of water springing up into everlasting life* (v. 14). Jesus' entire ministry teems with examples of drawing spiritual analogies and applications from common objects and events in the lives of the people to whom He ministered.

If we could do the same, we would aid people's understanding of spiritual truth by giving them a means of relating it to visible and tangible things in their daily lives.

Let's work for now at being obedient, pro-active, and creative; then, we will address three more lessons from the Master as seen in John 4 next time.



— by Pastor Rick Long  
Atonement Lutheran  
Arlington, Washington