

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

November 7, 1995

FOR FEELINGS COME AND FEELINGS GO
AND FEELINGS ARE DECEIVING.

MY WARRANT IS THE WORD OF GOD;
NOTHING ELSE IS WORTH BELIEVING.

FOR ALL MY HEART SHOULD FEEL CONDEMNED,
FOR WANT OF SOME SWEET TOKEN,
THERE IS ONE GREATER THAN MY HEART
WHOSE WORD CANNOT BE BROKEN.

I WILL TRUST IN GOD'S UNCHANGING
WORD 'TIL SOUL AND BODY SEVER,

FOR THOUGH ALL THINGS WILL
PASS AWAY,

HIS WORD WILL STAND

FOREVER.

MARTIN LUTHER



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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CONTENTS

Handling the Scriptures	p. 3
God's gifts of grace and faith	p. 4
What is uniquely Lutheran about the sacraments?	p. 6
Our journey to the AFLC	p. 8

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Sit still and listen

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15:11

Imagine some of you are reading these words on the run. Would you please sit down for a moment and listen? I want to tell you something. Sometimes prayer is listening to God. Psalm 46 seems fitting for 1995: "Be still and know that I am God."

Jesus speaks to you through the eternal Word. Do you take time to listen? You have the time — don't kid yourself — but do you reserve some of it to listen to your kind and loving Savior?

Jesus speaks to you that He may put His joy "in you." Not around you or for you to just notice in someone else, but to be in you! I notice that those who demonstrate the joy of the Lord always seem eager to listen.

Jesus desires that your joy may be full, that is, full of meaning. He said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." I suspect that one of the subtle tricks of the thief is to keep us talking about ourselves, so we forget to listen to God. Take time to listen and you will receive an abundance of joy from God.

Did you notice where joy originates? Not in you. Jesus is careful to say, "my joy"! Our joy is a gift from God. We can't earn it or work for it. We simply receive it with thankfulness.

There is a big difference between happiness and joy. Hap-

piness may grow out of joy, and it may not. Just because someone is unhappy doesn't mean they have lost their joy. Think of the Apostle Paul for a moment. When he wrote the book of Philippians, he had been put in prison for preaching the gospel. He lived in terrible circumstances, yet he wrote these words, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

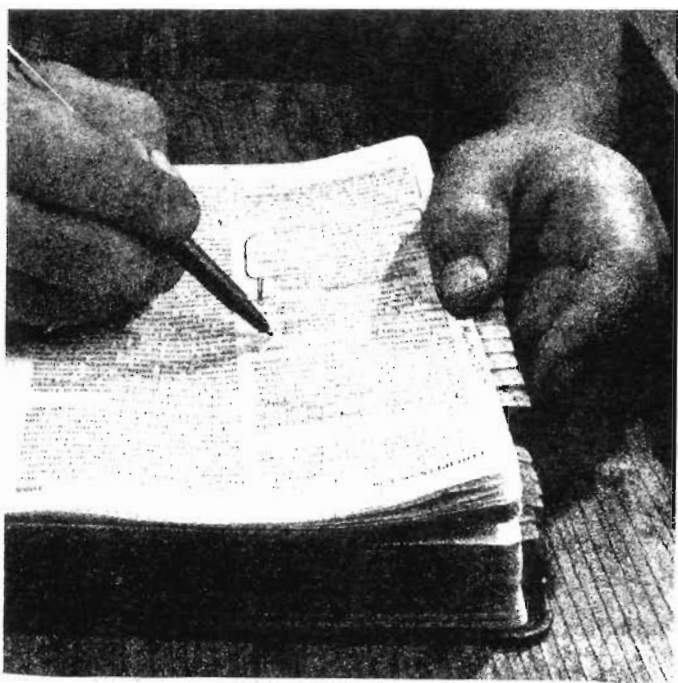
You ask, how could Paul rejoice in prison? Because he knew the source of joy who is Jesus Christ. Joy comes only from knowing Christ, and if you know Christ, nothing can steal your joy. On the other hand, it is impossible to have joy if you don't know Christ, even if you possess all the riches of the world.

I have stood at the deathbeds of many different kinds of people. Some have been rich, and some dirt poor. But death has a way of bringing all people to the same level. The only people who looked forward to meeting Jesus with a sense of joy were the ones who knew Him. I have also looked into the eyes of people who did not know Christ. They would have traded all their riches for one brief moment of joy and assurance of eternal life.



— by Rev. Joel
Lohafer
Triumph
Lutheran
Ferndale,
Washington

Handling the Scriptures



What is
unique about
the true
Lutheran
interpretation
of the Bible?

There are many principles of Bible interpretation that we as a Lutheran church have in common with our non-Lutheran, Christian brethren. For example, all Bible interpretation that is truly Christian is based on a recognition of the inerrancy and the inspiration and the authority of the Scriptures. In other words, Christian Bible interpretation does not challenge or define it. We are not above the Word, neither are we to simply “thrash around” in the Word, but all Christian Bible interpretation is **under** the Word.

With our Christian brethren, we understand that true Bible interpretation must be grammatical. The Word of God must be interpreted consistent with the rules of grammar that apply to the particular language in which it was written. We understand that true Bible interpretation must be historical. Because the Bible has been written at certain times and places in history, it must be understood and interpreted consistent with the context of that history. We understand, together

with our Christian brethren, that the sense and meaning of Scripture is one. Although a Scripture text may have many different applications, it has one and only one meaning.

These are not uniquely Lutheran emphases, but are Christian emphases; even though they are not always practiced.

The true Lutheran church, however, stands unique in its insistence that a chief principle of Bible interpretation is the proper distinction of law and gospel. This does **not** mean that other Christian churches make no distinction of law and gospel. It does mean that the true Lutheran church insists that the distinction of law and gospel is vital and fundamental to a correct interpretation of Scriptures.

The Word of God teaches us that the Word consists of two basic doctrines: the doctrine of law (Romans 3:19,20; 7:7) and the doctrine of gospel (Romans 3:21,22; 1:16). The final aim of both these doctrines is the same; namely, the eternal salvation of man. However, the content and function and application of the two doctrines differ by Divine intention. The true Lutheran church insists that maintaining the Divine difference between law and gospel is crucial to biblical interpretation.

Please note that the distinction of law and gospel is **not** a human “grid” in light of which we filter and shape and interpret the Divine Word. Rather, the distinction of law and gospel is a **Divine** “grid” which the Word of God applies to itself. The Word of God consistently and repeatedly teaches us of both law and gospel. We are biblical in our interpretation of Scripture only when our interpretation is consistent with what the Scripture itself says about law and gospel.

Many of the differences among Christians in Bible interpretation is related to an improper distinction of law and gospel. For example, a false understanding of eternal security is directly related to



— by Rev. Phil Haugen
Bethel/Faith Lutheran Parish
Culbertson, Montana



Martin Luther's Seal

THE first thing expressed in my seal is a cross, black, within the heart, to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saves us. 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' ♦♦♦ Now, although the cross is black, mortified, and intended to cause pain, yet it does not change the colour of the heart, does not destroy nature — i.e., does not kill, but keeps alive. 'For the just shall live by faith,' — by faith in the Saviour. ♦♦♦ But this heart is fixed upon the centre of a white rose, to show that faith causes joy, consolation and peace. The rose is white, not red, because white is the ideal colour of all angels and blessed spirits. ♦♦♦ This rose, moreover, is fixed in a sky — coloured ground, to denote that such joy of faith in the spirit is but an earnest and beginning of heavenly joy to come, as anticipated and held by hope, though not yet revealed. ♦♦♦ And around this groundbase is a golden ring, to signify that such bliss in heaven is endless, and more precious than all joys and treasures, since gold is the best and most precious metal. Christ, our dear Lord, He will give grace unto eternal life.

Amen

Martin Luther

While a professor at Wittenberg, Luther devised this seal which he declared was meant to be "expressive of his theology." This explanation is the gist of a letter written to his friend, Herr Spengler, town clerk of Nuremberg.

God's gifts

The major uniqueness of the Lutheran church is its strong scriptural foundation. We take our stand on the inerrant (free from error) and infallible (incapable of error) Word of God. We are privileged to have brief explanations of our beliefs in the major creeds, Luther's Small Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession. However, it is God's Word that is the basis for our teachings on God's grace and our position before Him.

We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

Our natural bent is to satisfy our fleshly desires, not obey a holy God. Have you ever noticed how a baby seems to manipulate its parents from the first day it is born? It cries and its needs are met. Soon it is crying to be held or for whatever it desires. Our nature of self-gratification exhibits itself early. Soon we are scheming for all manner of self-indulgence. There is no denying that we are truly sinful creatures.

HANDLING THE SCRIPTURES

the failure to recognize that the Word of God contains both law and gospel, that both law and gospel are true, but that the Divine application and function of law and gospel differ. Or take, for example, the doctrine of baptism. Confusion regarding the doctrine is usually related to confusion regarding law and gospel. Some view baptism as a work of man (law), when the Scripture teaches that baptism is the promise of God (gospel). The false teaching of eternal security in baptism ("once baptized, always saved") is due to a misapplication of law and gospel, when the gospel is applied to the impenitent.

There is a sense that every text of Scripture should be approached with the question, "What does this text teach me about the judgment of God (law) and what does this text teach me about the

grace of God (gospel)?" In other words, every text finally and ultimately is a law/gospel text, dealing with the issue, "What must I do to be saved?"

We are correct in interpreting the Scripture in this way, because the Scripture defines its own purpose in II Timothy 3:15-17 (NASB): "... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able (powerful) to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." *All Scripture is powerful ... to lead to salvation through faith in Jesus.*

May God in His mercy by His Holy Spirit teach our hearts the distinction of law and gospel, and keep us true to His Word.



of grace and faith

A Father full of grace

But there is hope! The more I study God's Word the more I become familiar with His personality and His attributes. I see a mighty Creator, a compassionate Redeemer, a just Judge, a Holy Spirit — a loving Father full of **grace**.

Grace is forgiveness of sins for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atonement. God has provided the covering for our sins; He sees us through Christ's blood.

Grace is an attribute of God. It proceeds from His very character. It is freely given. Nothing we could possibly do could merit a drop of grace, yet He gives it. It is free, yet costly beyond measure; the unspeakable cost of Christ's suffering and death. His shed blood was sprinkled on the altar in heaven for our sakes. It is a grace available to all who can say, "Yes, it was my sins that nailed the Son of God to the cross; it was for my sins that He bled — yes, I nailed Him there." And yet He says, "I forgive you." What love, what grace!

Accepting these gifts by faith

Faith is the complete trust with my whole heart that God is and His Word is true and His gifts are for me. I do not see God but His evidence is all around me and I have no excuse for not believing that He is and is who He says He is in the Bible (Romans 1:20). His Word has never been proven to be in error so how can I not believe it? Yes, faith says I do not see You, God, but I know You are there and Your promises for me are true.

Faith and grace are gifts of God, imparted to us through the Holy Spirit. They are one hundred percent God-given. Yet we must do something. We have to accept these gifts. An illustration from Luther's sermon on Luke 2:22-32 states: "If a wealthy man wanted to satisfy the needs of all the beggars in a city but some did not want to go to him and receive money from him, whose fault would it be that these beggars remain beggars and do

not also become rich? In reality it would not be the fault of the wealthy man but their own fault."

God is sovereign and He does one hundred percent of the work in giving these gifts to us, even the faith to accept them. But we humans are one hundred percent responsible to accept these gifts. Lutheranism, with its solid scriptural basis, accepts these apparent conflicts arising from human reason, realizing that from God's perspective these apparent contradictions do not exist.

Free to serve

We sinners, who have been saved (freed) from a life of slavery to Satan and showered with God's grace and abundant gifts, should be bursting with thankful hearts! We are now free to serve the King of Kings, the Creator of the universe; even to call Him *Father*. Our desire should be to serve Him as bondservants, looking only to please Him.

Are we really ready to let God's love flow through us to the unlovely in this world? We must be careful not to emphasize God's sovereignty or His doing the work in us, to the point of neglecting our responsibility of really obeying Him. We need to understand Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Our obedience to Christ's commands is an outward indicator of the condition of our hearts. I encourage you to read the following verses (John 13:34; 14:15,21,23; 15:7,10,12) and then the Sermon on the Mount.

I am thankful that I have the privilege of fellowship in the AFLC; that part of Lutheranism that is close to our pietistic roots leading from Philip Spener through Hans Nielsen Hauge to the present. But we, too, must constantly consider the great gifts we have received, praise our God, and go forth obeying Him!



— by Dr. Bob Kohl
Calvary Lutheran
Arlington, South Dakota

What is uniquely Lutheran

What is so unique about the Lutheran view of the sacraments? The question goes to the heart of the subject that, more than any other, gave shape to the Lutheran Reformation. Some reformers reacted to the abuse of the sacraments in the Catholic church by devaluing and at times neglecting them. Martin Luther, instead, sought to uphold the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper by recovering their biblical meaning. He was unwilling to surrender his distinctive understanding of the sacraments.

In interpreting the Sacraments, Luther followed the principle of allowing the Word to stand without rationalization.

This can be seen in his understanding of the Lord's Supper. The Scripture reports that Jesus gave the disciples bread and wine. Then it reports that Jesus told them they were receiving His body and blood (Matthew 26:26-29). What does this mean? Some explained that the bread and wine were changed into the body and blood (transubstantiation). Others explained that Christ's words, "this is my body, this is my blood" merely meant this "symbolizes my body, ... my blood." They say the body and blood of Christ are not present, but are symbolized by the bread and wine.

Luther rejected these as rationalizations. He sought to allow the Scripture to speak for itself: we receive both bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ. This gave rise to the doctrine of the real presence: along with the humble bread and wine, the glorious body and blood of Christ are really present.

We also see the same approach concerning baptism. Scripture repeatedly affirms the spiritual benefit of baptism: "the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38); "Baptism now saves you ..." (I Peter 3:21); "He saved us

... by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

"Now wait a minute," some rationalize, "baptism doesn't save, only Christ can save. The Scripture must mean something else." Luther allowed the Scripture to stand. If it says baptism saves; then baptism saves.

The Sacraments are God's work.

In a small town, a Baptist pastor and a Lutheran pastor became close friends. As they discussed the sacraments, they seemed to be talking past each other without understanding each other's point of view. Finally, the Baptist pastor realized they had different basic presuppositions. For him, the sacraments are man's work and the focus is on man's responsibility. For the Lutheran pastor, the sacraments are God's work and their focus is God's gracious activity.

The Sacraments are works of grace.

Grace is an attribute of God whereby He desires to save sinners. Grace is the motivation of all God's saving work. Grace motivated the Father to send Christ into a world of sinners and to be crucified in payment for our sins. Grace motivates the Holy Spirit to come and apply salvation to the individual sinner. By grace He awakens the sinner to His sin. By grace, He offers the forgiveness of sins and He creates the very faith necessary to receive this forgiveness.

The *means of grace* are the means through which God, in His grace, conveys His saving work to us. The Word is the primary means whereby the Holy Spirit accomplishes His saving work. Where there is the Word, whether it is read, heard, preached, or taught, there is the "Power of God unto salvation."

The sacraments — baptism and the Lord's Supper — are secondary means of grace. Lutherans believe that the visible



about the sacraments?

elements of the sacraments, united with the Word, are true means of grace; means whereby the Holy Spirit actually works and conveys the gracious work of salvation. Thus, the focus of the sacraments is the grace of God.

God has attached the promise of His gracious work to humble elements: bread, wine, water.

As a husband, I'm a slow learner, but I've finally caught on to a few basic truths. One of these truths is that it's necessary to give my wife flowers. To me, flowers are not very important. They're pretty, they smell nice, but they will wilt and will soon be thrown out. However, they are important to my wife; not because they are flowers, but because of the promise of love that I have attached to them. She sees the flowers and knows that I love her.

In the same way God has attached the promise of His love to humble elements. The bread and wine are important to us, because in them we receive the love of God in concrete form; the very body and blood of Christ.

The sacraments are for our assurance.

Why did God give us the sacraments when the Word is a sufficient means of His grace? The Lord assures us of our salvation through the Word we hear, but there are times when our faith is so very weak. At these times, the Lord in His wisdom gives us more. He places in our hands the bread and wine; humble elements that we can touch, smell and taste. He thereby confirms in a visible, concrete way that our sins are forgiven.

He also comforts us through reminding us of the promises of our baptism. Of course, some use their baptism as an excuse for living in sin and a false covering for lack of faith. However, when han-

dled properly, baptism is a source of assurance for the weak. In baptism, God took the promises of salvation found within Scripture and applied them to us personally. In our weakness and doubt He reminds us that these promises are still valid, that He does not withdraw them. As we cling to the promises of baptism, it becomes, along with the Word, a powerful source of assurance.

The sacraments, as true means of grace, must always be held in tension with the necessity of faith.

On the one hand, Lutherans must avoid a sacramentalism that emphasizes outward participation without inward living faith. The one that has fallen from the faith he was baptized into must be warned that he is lost. The one who would come to the Lord's Supper without a heart of repentance and faith must be warned he is "eating and drinking damnation unto himself" (I Corinthians 11:29). True Lutheran evangelism must always be concerned with the baptized lost.

On the other hand, Lutherans must avoid a form of faith that is rooted in personal experience at the expense of the objective truth of the death and resurrection of Christ as found in the Word and sacraments. Christians must be called to find their assurance, not in their experiences, but in Christ.

The Word is precious for it is there we find Christ. Our baptism is precious, for it is there we entered into His death and Resurrection. The Lord's Supper is precious, for it is there we receive Christ, broken for our sins.



— by Rev. Martin Horn
Bethany Lutheran
Astoria, Oregon



Truth for all eternity

It was not a quick decision. It was not an easy one. It was one which came after much introspection and study of the Word. When it was all over, at times I could not realize what had transpired. And now we find ourselves very happy with our new affiliation.

I had been reared in a very strong American Lutheran congregation in every dimension of what the church is to be. This was the ALC before the merger of 1960. After that I noticed far too many changes which pointed to drastic changes in position. But, as many others, I endured the changes.

In 1970 I attended the ALC convention in Texas and returned to the congregation which I had then served for twenty years. Had I followed my "inner" sense, I would have, personally, left the synod then. But again I thought of the great church which the Spirit of God had given to us here in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. I thought, "We cannot leave — those of us who stand directly on the absolute authority of the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions. We must remain faithful."

Here at Ruthfred Lutheran, 13 sons of the congregation have gone into the holy ministry. We have trained six vicars, have

Our journey

had two parish workers and two assistant pastors. Things went well from that point of view. Our seminary was very understanding and cooperative as to who was sent to be the vicar or intern at Ruthfred. The seminary knew that one with a liberal theology just would not work out here.

But underneath it all, I as the pastor and we as a congregation were not satisfied with the way our church body was going. The trend was not going to come to a halt. With each church publication and with each report of what was being taught at the seminary, we were more and more saddened.

As for me, I would retire. I reasoned, "I am going to endure it and, when I leave, a decision can be made."

I was willing to leave, but in my soul I felt the need to continue to guide what would ensue, if at all possible. Ruthfred has been my major concern for the last 45 years. I was assigned it as a young seminary graduate. This mission congregation has been blessed as Jesus Christ, His love and Word have been the main focus of the ministry.

Twenty five years ago when Harold Lindsell was editor of *Christianity Today*, he became so saddened over the steadily weakening view of the Scriptures within the nominal Christian church, that he wrote his book *The Battle for the Bible*.

He chronicled a decay process in most of the major denominations which began with the first step of unbelief in the inerrancy of the Bible, in God as its source, and in the eternal and unchangeable nature of its every word.

Lindsell agreed with critics that a man can believe in Christ as his Savior without even seeing a Bible, but — once a church body stops believing what the Bible declares about its source and authority, that church crosses a watershed, down which waters flow to a dead sea of increasing error and eventual ruin.

If Lindsell is looking today, he can see that his prognosis was accurate. We see the Bible being manipulated to promote favorite and deviant causes. We see church bodies espousing homosexuality and abortion on demand, while forsaking basic Christian tenets.

Many theologians these days no longer see the Lord as the only source of all Scripture. They say "I believe the Bible is inspired by God but derives from the minds of human authors." Today when we use the word "inspired," we see perhaps, an artist experiencing a sunrise and responding with a painting or a sonata. With this definition of the

to the AFLC

Again I asked myself, "Why in the world would I as a pastor in his 60s ever want to go through the procedure of "jumping" synods?" But many people came and said to me, "If you do not help us, we may never get this accomplished."

I serve a very loving and appreciative group of people. I have always tried to let God speak not only through His Word (His absolute voice) but He has also spoken through His people who are living and ruled by that Word.

To complicate things, (if I dare use that word) the bishop of our area is one of the finest men I know. He is kind, honest, loving and such a personal friend. But God bless him — he was so precious during all of our meetings and deliberations, that he did not stand in the way of our doing what we felt was the correct thing: the will of God. I cannot thank him enough for his magnanimity. I hesitated to hurt him in any way.

After many meetings and much prayer, (and all our actions were in love) we left the ELCA in June of 1994. While I have dear friends and good memories, we are

happy to be in a group of congregations that believe the Bible is the Word of God, the Lutheran Confessions are an expression of the truth of the Word and where pastors are being trained who will unequivocally say, "The Bible as the Spirit gave it is inerrant, trustworthy and final!"

Yes, I still have times when I think, "Why did the former American Lutheran Church have to merge with other groups? We were so strong. We were so biblical. We were viable and did a lot of mission work at home and in the world." But that day has now gone. That church body is no more. I have long loved John 16:13, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." And again John 8:32, "If ye continue in my Word, then you are my disciples indeed."

It happened! Now we are members of a group which, to us, is founded totally upon the Word of God. We take off our hats to all that was good in the past; we also take off our coats to the future. Our hope and prayer is *may Jesus Christ be praised, and may souls be won for His eternal Kingdom.*



— by Rev. John H. Dennis
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

word "inspired," it's easy to play "fast and loose" with, or be critics of the Bible — as we might with the painting or sonata.

The Greek word usually translated "inspired" in the English New Testament is Theo-pneustos (God-breathed), not breathed "upon" or breathed "into." In contrast, all of man's words are "man-breathed."

This is clearly stated in many ways in the Bible:

"No Scripture came by the impulse of man" (II Peter 1:21).

"The Spirit of Christ speaking from within the prophet ... " (I Peter 1:11).

"For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:20).

"Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Behold I have put my words in your mouth ...'" (Jeremiah 1:9).

"The Holy Spirit ... speaking to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet" (Acts 28:25).

"So Balaam said ... 'Am I able to speak anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak'" (Numbers 22:38).

Our all-powerful, everywhere-present, all knowing God has given us His "It Is Written" Book; absolute truth for all eternity!



—by Orin & Elizabeth Wechsler
Seattle, Washington

Combining youth groups

There are distinct advantages in doing some things together with other Free Lutheran congregations. It can enable us to do things we could not do alone. We can provide high quality outreach and growth events and challenge our youth to get involved in ministry.

Your congregation's youth can be involved from the beginning. Here is where the planning takes place and where training for ministry begins. Let them carry the ball. Set up your framework at the beginning and let them go into action. Including them in leadership will enhance the events.

Set up a planning notebook. Here details of organization can be kept. When your leaders move on, your new ones will have direction.

Every meeting should be evangelical and evangelistic. This means the Word of God is taught

or preached and youth are called to be saved. Fun and fellowship only is not enough.

Have a buzz session with the youth in order to determine the direction you would like to go. These ideas can be presented to your youth planners and doers. They can add their own ideas.

Combining youth events can be a good idea, especially in smaller congregations. Networking of youth directors and pastors is also good.

Pastors won't you please get involved with your young people? When you are part of them, you are part of the solution for youth ministry! Then can follow combining youth groups. The result of this can be a more total impact on the lives of our youth. We can't really go forward until our pastors get geared up for youth ministry.

— by Rev. Dennis Gray
Youth Ministries Director

Youth workers needed

The AFLC Youth Board continues to seek a full-time youth director for the AFLC. Pray that this position might be filled according to God's will.

Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Washington, has over half the needed funds to begin the process of calling a youth worker.

Christ the King Lutheran, Pipestone, Minnesota, is holding "Tentmakers" youth ministry management workshops with AFLC Pastor Richard Anderson to aid the congregation's search for a youth pastor.

Pray for these and other youth workers serving AFLC congregations.

Todd Peterson, Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, MN.

Kevin Olson, Faith, Shakopee and King of Glory, Eden Prairie, MN.

Brenda Stilley, Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, PA.

Matthew Greven, Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, WA.

Jim and Gwen Berge, Medicine Lake Lutheran, Plymouth, MN.

Steve and Patty Skinner, Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, OR.

Kevin Foss, Calvary Lutheran, Fergus Falls, MN.

David Foss, Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, MN.

Bob Halverson, Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, MN.

Cindy Galland, Minnesota Valley Lutheran, Lakeville, MN.

Karen Pederson, Zion Lutheran, Tioga, ND.

Youth Leadership Conference

July 15-19, 1996

AFLBS Campus

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Free Lutheran Youth Convention

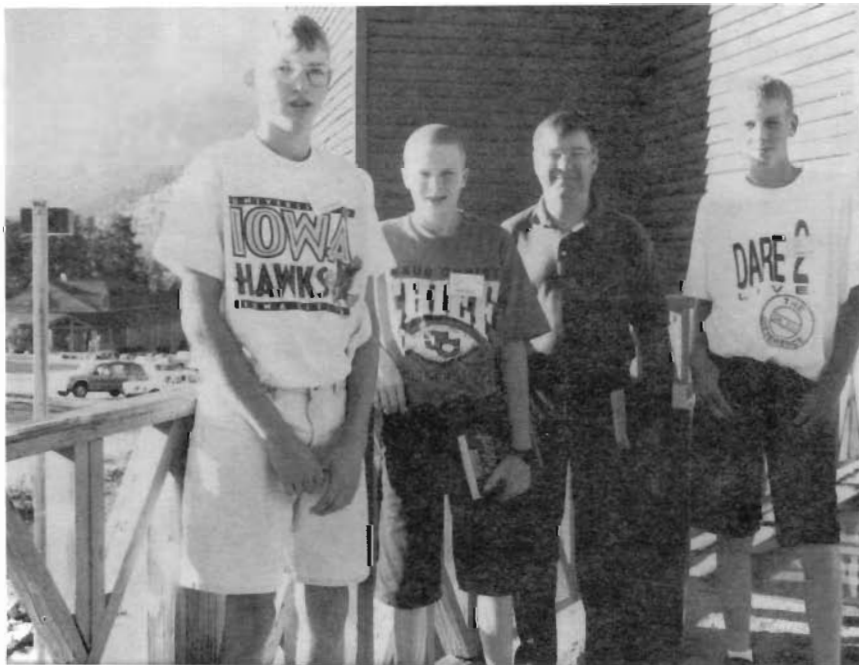
August 4-9, 1997

Estes Park, Colorado

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Room reserved for 1500 people.



Picture you and your youth group back at Estes Park in 1997!

In cooperation with God

Where shall we begin, we wondered? Some facts we knew. The World Mission Prayer League had begun sending missionaries to this city of Puebla, Mexico, about thirteen years ago as the result of evangelistic efforts by Mexican brethren who lived in the mountain villages. We understood there had been two churches in two locations of the city and one preaching point. We also knew that the Mexican Alliance church body, with which we affiliate, had assigned Dick to the task of "leadership training." Through contacts on our way down to Puebla, we learned that one of the churches had closed and the other had suffered greatly because of poor leadership, losing all but one extended family. They continued to worship under the leadership of Aby, a young lady in the family. Probably the most important of all the information we received was the phone number of someone in Aby's neighborhood!

There was a time in foreign mission work when the missionary made all the decisions. With the establishing of national church bodies this is not true. So each of us must ask himself, "How can I cooperate with God in the work already begun? How can I cooperate with the national church, the national brethren, in what they perceive to be the way to go? How can we work together to accomplish the task God sets before us?" These questions lead to the one we must seek to answer with the national brethren, "What is the task God has for us?"

We began answering these profound questions by calling that phone number!

And so we met the Torres family — eleven people who are not


WORLD MISSIONS

wavering in their commitment to be Christians and who have taken a strong stand on keeping their Lutheran church open. Juan and Marta are the parents of Miquel, 19; Martita, 15; Carlos, 14; David, 12; Jonathan, 9 and Naomi, 6. Juan's brother married Marta's sister. Eight or nine years ago this sister died, leaving several children. Aby was 15 at the time and became the mother of the family. Through Aby's influence two of her sisters have become strong Christians also, — Angelica, about 20 and Laura, around 17 years old.

Dick's assignment of training leaders began right here with this family. Extension seminary classes with programmed texts have been used in several countries for the last 25 years or so, and have proven to be an effective answer for training men and women who cannot go to a formal training center. Aby and Miquel had studied some materials previously with other missionaries and now were ready to begin again. Angel-

ica had not studied before and it soon became apparent that it will be a challenge to have enough materials to satisfy her desire and ability to learn.

Aby had previously studied a doctrine course that I had been involved in preparing in Bolivia several years ago, a course written by Bob Andrews who is now the director of the World Mission Prayer League. How great it was to sit in on her teaching it in the church's Sunday school program. Now with Dick, she studied a course on preparing sermons and we were delighted to see her application of what she learned.

In cooperating with God in His program here in Puebla, we have already seen potential leaders emerge as materials are studied and then taught by those who have completed them. Angelica and Marita are teaching Sunday school, and together with Aby and Miquel they are ready to begin another session of studying. 

— by Clara Gunderson
Puebla, Mexico

Praise and prayer

Praise God for the continued travel safety for missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel and family as they have done deputation work in the West Coast and other congregations before returning to Hitterdahl, Minnesota.

Pray for the recovery of retired pastors Mauritz Lundeen and Merle Knutson who have had recent heart surgeries and for Mrs. Fred (Karen) Faughn who had a serious heart attack. Pray also for Rev. Alan Arneson who has been diagnosed as having Addison's Disease. Thankfully the medication seems to be helping him.

Praise God for the good enrollment at the AFLC Schools and the encouraging reports from both the seminary and Bible school where a "spirit of prayer" characterizes the student body this fall.

Pray for the Home and World Missions directors and committees as they consider areas of ministry along with urgent financial needs.

Pray for the Board of Trustees as they seek to call new faculty for the positions left open by the resignations of Dr. Steve Lombardo and Dr. Craig Jennings. Pray also for Rev. Don Greven, dean of AFLBS, as he ministers in Hungary during his sabbatical.

CAMPUS

Dr. Craig Jennings has resigned from the faculty of the AFLC Schools, effective the end of the current semester. Dr. Jennings taught part time at the schools for two years before joining the faculty full time in 1991. AFLTS Dean, Dr. Francis Monseth said, "We are extremely grateful for the ministry of Dr. Jennings these 4 and 1/2 years. We'll miss him greatly."

Library books given to AFLC schools

AFLC Schools has recently received generous gifts of books from the libraries of Dr. Walter Jennrich, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Rev. Leland Evenson of Minneapolis. Dr. Jennrich was a long-time professor of theology and classical languages at Concordia College in Milwaukee. Rev. Evenson has been the pastor of Vision of Glory Lutheran Church in Minneapolis for many years.

The seminary and Bible school are grateful for these additions and welcome such gifts from interested friends. Books received which are already a part of the library holdings or are not usable by the library are made available to students and faculty.



AFLC Schools full-time faculty, fall of 1995 (seated): Dr. Craig Jennings and Dr. Francis Monseth. (Standing): Mr. Jerry Nelson, Rev. Jerry Moan and Rev. Jerry Holmaas.



Pictured are the four juniors at AFLTS (L. to R.): David Johnson, Ivars Krafts, Jason Holt and Gary Haug.



Dinner in the AFLBS cafeteria (L. to R.): Sara Hartsoch, Ray, North Dakota; Ingrid Dyrud, Middle River, Minnesota; Andrea Burnes, Cloquet, Minnesota and Tami Fugleberg, Roseau, Minnesota.

Seminary awarded grants

The Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis has been awarded \$5,100 in grants from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL).

A \$2,500 grant will allow pastors and lay pastors to participate in a three-week inter-term in January 1996, as well as a two-week institute of theology in July and August. Courses will be offered in preaching, teaching, counseling, evangelism and administration skills. The remaining funds will be used for faculty development and student financial aid.

1996 Pastors' Conference will be held January 16-18 at the Association Retreat Center near Osceola, Wisconsin. Dr. Waldo Werning will be the guest speaker during the stewardship seminar on Wednesday. Each pastor is encouraged to bring one lay leader to the conference to share in the stewardship seminar. The seminar is funded by a grant from AAL and a workbook will be provided for each participant.

AFLBS calendar of events

Fall Quarter exams

November 20-22

Thanksgiving/Quarter break

November 23-26

Winter Quarter

November 27-February 22

Parents' Day

December 9

Christmas Concert

December 10 (4 p.m.)

Christmas Break

December 16- January 1

Missions Conference

February 11-14

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Rev. Tim Hinrichs and Renata Ceisler were married in Poland on October 7. Rev. Don Richman, director of the East European Mission Network (EEMN) was at the wedding along with the groom's parents, Rev. David and Claire Rene Hinrichs of Ortonville, Minnesota. Pastor Tim Hinrichs is an AFLC missionary on loan to EEMN serving in the Silesian regions of Poland and the Czech Republic.

Rev. Rob Lewis of Newark, Illinois, has resigned as pastor of West Lisbon Lutheran in order to accept the position of director in Canada of the World Mission Prayer League. In his new position Rev. Lewis and his family will live in Camrose, Alberta. He has served the West Lisbon congregation since 1990.

Rev. David Johnson of Hillsboro, Missouri, has accepted the call to serve as pastor of Ortleigh Free Lutheran, Ortleigh, South Dakota. Rev. Johnson is currently in a colloquy program with the AFLC Coordinating Committee and the Free Lutheran Seminary. Rev. Johnson is the son of Rev. and Mrs. Walter Johnson of Shakopee, Minnesota.

The AFLC Committee of Reconciliation met September 30 and October 14. Minutes of the committee's meetings are available upon request from the AFLC headquarters, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.

Rev. Wayne and Patricia Juntunen, Grafton, North Dakota, are in Jurmala, Latvia, where he is teaching a four-week course at the Deaconal Institute. The Juntunens expect to return to Grafton from Helsinki, Finland, on December 6. The Deaconal Institute is the same school where Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean, taught during his sabbatical in 1993-94. Dr. and Mrs. Monseth plan to return to Latvia and Estonia in January, 1996 where he will be the guest lecturer at the Deaconal Institute and the Tartu Theological Academy. He will return to Minneapolis in time to begin the second semester at AFLTS.

Pastor Ken and Marilyn Thoreson, Janesville, Wisconsin, and senior seminarian, **Kevin and Pam Olson**, Shakopee, Minnesota, spent two weeks in Eastern Europe beginning October 2. Pastor Thoreson conducted evangelistic meetings.

Address changes

Rev. Larry Haagenson, 1221 Bristlecone Pl., Loveland, CO 80538; phone (970) 203-1287.

Rev. James Johnson, 2708 84th Ave. N., Brooklyn Park, MN 55444; phone (612) 566-5969.

Rev. Lynn Kinneberg, P.O. Box 442, McVie, ND 58254.

Rev. Fred Faughn, 138 Hampstad Ave. Apt. 308, Savannah, GA 31405.

Rev. Earl Korhonen, 908 Hillcrest Dr., Snohomish, WA 98290.

Rev. Tom Tuura, 909 Armstrong Blvd. S., St. James, MN 56081.



AFLC Board of Trustees (seated): Mr. Emory Flaten, Mr. David Borg and Mr. Wayne Floan. (Standing): Rev. Lyndon Korhonen and Rev. Kenneth Moland. Not pictured: Rev. Gary Jorgenson and Mr. Tim Jones.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



AFLC memorial gifts

September 1995

In memory of	Given by	Department
Paul Flaten	Vrenda Bengtson	AFLBS Building Fund
	Lowell, Donna Mae	
	Hogberg	AFLBS
	Edgar, Olger, Nova Rokke	AFLBS
	Dorothy Russum	Home Missions
Pauline Lyon	Valborg Hedman	AFLBS
Marvin Quanbeck	Curtis, Pamela Twedt	AFLBS Music Dept.
	Charlotte Quanbeck	Missionaries D. Abel, P. Abel, J. Abel, C. Dyrud
		D. Giles
Chad Davidson	M/M Lester Davidson	AFLTS
Clarence Thompson	Helny, Edna, Inger	
	Ohnstad	World Missions
Orien Skramstad	Norma Aasness	Missionary D. Nelson
Cleone Riemer	Esther Larson	AFLTS
Rudy Gordon	M/M Gerry Knudsvig	AFLBS
Lyle Olson	M/M Gregory Olson	AFLBS
Anna Solum	Orrin, Lorraine Nyhus	AFLBS
Legacy received		
Elvira O'Dell to the AFLC		

Tucson, Arizona — Pictured is AFLC President Robert L. Lee at the installation service of Rev. Frank Cherney as the pastor of Living Faith Lutheran on September 10, 1995. At an earlier service Pastor Cherney was installed as pastor of Body of Christ Lutheran, a home mission congregation. Living Faith is located on the southwest side of Tucson and Body of Christ is 25 miles away on the east side of the metropolitan area of nearly 800,000 people.

Body of Christ came to the AFLC after a member had seen an ad in the newspaper for Living Faith Free Lutheran. Worship is currently held at an elementary school.

Pastor Cherney's new address is: 7418 E. Kenyon Dr., Tucson, AZ 85710-3731; phone 520-885-9913.

Lakeville, Minnesota — Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran held its first annual Summer Celebration last August 27. The event was planned as an outreach to the community, prior to which many weeks of canvassing was done. Roy Hope presented a concert in a large tent set up on the church grounds, followed by the preaching of God's Word by Rev. Allen Monson, local pastor. Following the service a barbecue was served.

WMF In Memoriams

Berta Blikre, Tioga, ND
 Marvin Ulven, Tioga, ND
 Verdi Halvorsen, Tioga, ND
 Marvin Quanbeck, McVile, ND
 Arthur Larson, Valley City, ND
 Esther Nordberg, Spicer, MN
 Myrtle Erickson, Arthur, ND
 Mary Veit, Shevlin, MN
 Margaret Johnson, Upsala, MN
 Dora Dulager, Sebeka, MN
 Melvin D. Olason, Grand Forks, ND
 Elmer Sateren, McVile, ND
 Anna Sletten, Faith, SD
 Mabel Engler, Pukwana, SD
 Steve DeVrie, Valley City, ND

Mrs. Emma Knudsvig, Buxton, North Dakota, passed away October 2, 1995. She often assisted her daughter-in-law Karen, who lived next door, in WMF office work. Blessed be her memory.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - September 30, 1995

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,591.00	\$11,465.50	\$148,044.77	55
Seminary	163,200.00	10,896.55	80,210.77	49
Bible School	244,800.00	13,278.16	102,889.06	42
Home Missions.	335,040.00	10,061.03	171,897.71	51
World Missions.	359,927.00	21,137.86	206,058.51	57
Capital Investment	35,425.00	575.60	14,788.56	42
Parish Education	67,868.00	2,269.71	34,770.21	51
Church Extension	10,000.00	3,449.92	8,726.44	87
TOTALS	\$1,484,851.00	\$73,134.33	\$767,386.03	52
TOTALS 1994	1,422,890.00	76,358.17	804,517.58	57
Goal 75%				

EDITORIALS

Where's the beef?

In a TV commercial of a few years ago a lady in a fast-food hamburger place was full of complaints. She expressed them by asking the question, "Where's the beef?" She had the bun, the condiments and all the extras, but very little of the most important part of a hamburger: the beef.

It may be appropriate, as we consider the work of our congregations, to continually ask a similar type of question. It is very easy to fill up our lives and our congregation's ministry with the extras. We can get people involved in a lot of good activities and stuff ourselves and others full of fun times and helpful instruction. The question must be asked, however, are we eating and sharing "the beef"?

The Apostle Paul wanted the people in Corinth to have more than just the extras. He wanted them to have a clear understanding of that which is the core of the Christian life. "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, ... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:1-4, NIV).

The gospel, the good news of Jesus crucified and risen again, is to be the meat, the center of the lives we live and the message we share. That good news of what Christ has done gives flavor and meaning to the rest.

The bun and the condiments are good, but their

value is lost without the beef. In a similar way, much of what is done under the label "Christian work" has little lasting impact because the gospel is missing.

Instruction in how to live moral and upright lives is good and important, but it needs to be given with the gospel in view. Telling people how to serve Christ has power when it is accompanied by the message of how the Lord has served us. The call to Christians to do better must not be given apart from the proclamation that we are changed because of what Jesus has done.

We must be careful that we do not become like a jockey whipping a dead horse, expecting him to win the race. The horse needs to first be made alive before it can run. Life does not come from the whip.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ" (Ephesians 2:1,4,5, NIV).

It is not the whip of the law that gives life. It is the beautiful gospel, the declaration of what Jesus has done in dying on the cross for our sins and rising again from the dead. We are making a tragic mistake if we think whipping people more will cause them to run the race better. They need to hear the gospel. They need to hear what God has done. That is the "beef." That is what is of "first importance." That is what we are called to share. That is where life is found.

Choosing the right path

Martin Luther did not choose the path that led to popularity. He would have had far fewer enemies and more friends if he had just kept quiet. His Lord and his conscience would not permit him to do that, however. He was convinced that it was more important to take a stand that is right, than it is to be liked.

Few people in history have probably made so many others angry as Luther did. He disagreed with authorities who considered themselves above questioning. He made serious accusations that could not be disproved. He said the leaders of the church were wrong and in great need of correction. He became to many, the greatest pain in their lives.

Some seem to take a strange pleasure in starting and fueling arguments. This was not the case with Luther. It is more appropriate to describe him as a reluctant reformer. He did not relish opposing the authorities and pointing out errors. He desired to follow the instruction of Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Luther did what he did not because he was seeking to be contentious or gain a position, but because of his convictions based on the Word of God. He wanted to be at peace. We should as well. We must also realize, however, that standing on the Word and saying and doing what is right will sometimes cause division. Jesus said, "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (Luke 12:51, NIV). He also said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets" (Luke 6:26, NIV).

Standing on God's Word may bring us more problems than popularity. The issue is how we deal with that. Do we go to one extreme and attack in return, fighting as the world fights? Or do we go to the other extreme and compromise in order to be well liked and avoid a conflict?

God calls on us to take the path of faithfulness; honoring Him as the Lord to be followed and trusting in Him as the One who always cares for His own, knowing that His thoughts and desires matter the most.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

It's our business

A lady was waiting in a shopping mall for her husband. A Christian approached her, gave her a tract and asked if she knew for sure she was going to heaven. As they talked, her husband returned, and she had to leave. As they walked away the husband asked, "What did he want?" The wife replied, "He wanted to know if I was going to heaven." The husband responded with, "That's none of his business." To which the wife remarked, "Funny, but if you could have seen the expression on his face you would have thought that it was."

Sharing Christ with others is our business as believers! You may never distribute tracts at the local mall. But the good news is ours to share, no matter what our method. Sure, the great commission is an enormous task! Who doesn't feel inadequate? But be assured that God wants to use you as a harvest worker. Maybe you simply don't feel "gifted" as a soul-winner. Maybe you would tend to say, "Here am I, Lord; send him!"

What can we glean from Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (John 4)? Pastor A.W. Knock calls this "One of the finest illustrations in Scripture of the Master Soul-Winner at work" (Person-

al Evangelism, p.15). Few would consider the request for a drink as a spiritual discussion starter, but this is what our Lord did. He met this woman right at her level and asked a simple favor of her. That's all it took to open the door. Jesus further arouses her curiosity with an offer of His own — living water. She begins to question: Where could He get such water? Who could ever make such an offer? Christ has awakened in her a sense of need. Not by arguing with her or "preaching" at her. Our Lord gently shows this woman that her need will never be satisfied in the way that she is trying to meet it. He is the One who can satisfy her aching soul.

No, sin and guilt are not ignored (verse 16ff). But the woman needs to acknowledge it for herself. Pastor Knock makes the point well: "If a soul is to be won for Christ, he must be made to see his lost condition. Not until then will he see the need of a Savior ... Sin cannot be excused if souls are to be saved. Firmly but earnestly pointing out all sin is showing kindness to the one in question. It opens the way for a confession and full forgiveness" (p.16).

Jesus listened to this hurting soul. He allowed the woman to speak of those things which occupied her mind. He demonstrated

that He truly cared by gently guiding her back to the heart of the matter — the matter of the heart.

The result? This woman herself became a witness, thanks to her encounter with Christ. And her witness bore fruit. Not only do her neighbors come out to see Jesus, but they testify that because of their own personal contact with Him they, too, have come to faith.

Let's not lose sight of the ripe harvest fields all around us (John 4:35). We possess the powerful gospel seed which is able to penetrate petrified hearts.

This is our Reformation heritage. It's a heritage passed on to me years ago by a faithful Sunday school superintendent who taught us Luther's powerful hymn — a hymn which sticks with me to this day:

*God's Word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.*



— By Rev.
Jerry Moan
AFLC Schools
Minneapolis,
Minnesota