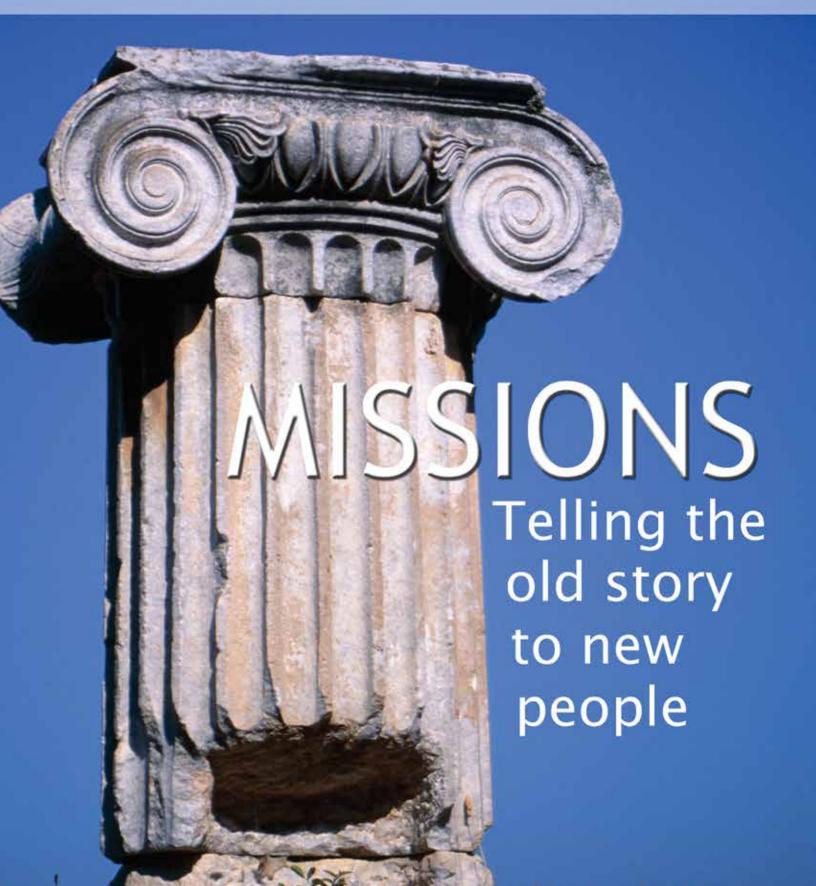
# THE LUTHERAN SADOR



### [Encouraging Word]

## The REAL Savior

Do I think that the same energies that I use to wash my kitchen floor and make supper can be employed to make myself pure and acceptable before God?

here are plenty of false religions in this world that hold up their false gods to worship, pray to and trust in. I have never been tempted to convert to any of these faiths, but I am tempted daily to try to make myself my own savior.

I am compelled and drawn to search for holiness within myself. I examine my actions, thoughts and attitudes for evidence of a holy life. I look back on a day, searching for some good thing in it to give me some hope and encouragement that the Spirit of God still lives in me. I don't see anything good — I was angry with my daughter, selfish with my time, I didn't read my Bible, I didn't even pray for my own family. If I see some good behavior on my part, then I could be more hopeful for the future; I could have a little more assurance that I am still saved. Discouragement presses down on me again. Instead of going to Jesus for holiness, I continue to press on myself.

Who is the savior in that scenario? "I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:11).

Isaiah 44 paints a picture of a man who is an idol builder. The man cuts down trees. Half of the wood he uses for making a fire to keep warm and cook his food, the other half he uses to make an idol to bow down to. Isaiah says he is misled, deluded. He does not see or understand the stupidity of this. He cannot see that this block of wood that he holds onto as a god is a lie. "... he cannot save himself" (verse

20).

Like the idol builder, I cannot save myself. Do I think that the same energies that I use to wash my kitchen floor and make supper can be employed to make myself pure and acceptable before God? How similar I am to the idol builder. I, too, am in the same predicament unless the grace of God comes to me.

"Apart from me there is no Savior." These words ring over and over again in my mind. God says to me over and over again, "I am the only one. I want you to have me for a Savior" (Isaiah 40-49). "Turn to me and be saved" (Isaiah 45:22).

There is good news. Immediately after the Lord tells about the deluded idol builder He says, "Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel I will not forget you. I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:21-22).

Do we see how worthless and futile it is to look to our own selves to improve our spiritual condition? God grant us the grace to just give up our own striving and abandon ourselves and our plans for self-improvement. Leave it behind and trust in Him. May He be the only Savior we turn to.

> — Karina Olson Faith Free Lutheran Minneapolis, Minn.

October 2004 Volume 42, Number 10



## **ELUTHERANAMBASSADOR**

Editor

Pastor Craig Johnson craigi@teleport.com

**Managing Editor** 

**Editorial Board** 

Ruth Gunderson ruthg@aflc.org

Pastor John Mundfrom Oryen Benrud Pastor Jerry Moan Pastor James L. Johnson

The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 545-5631; fax: 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org

**Subscriptions rates:** 

\$15 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18 a year, International

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

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

### [Sound Bites]

Taken from "Each for the Other, All for Christ," a biography of Amos and Ovidie Dyrud, missionaries to Madagascar. See page 12 for a review.

Dear friend, I mean you, let's clasp our hands together and set our faces and our feet and go marching God's way with unceasing prayer to Him in our hearts, to possess all these unpossessed areas for His Kingdom — constantly remembering to let His Holy Spirit possess the unpossessed and unconquered areas in our hearts and lives and billfolds.

I know God needs workers out in the distant heathen lands, I know too that because of lack of workers many natives die without having heard a word about Him at all. ... I do not think I am a fit tool for the mission work because I am not a good Christian. Still, if God has chosen me for this work, He can make me what I ought to be.

> — Ragna Dahle Missionary to Madagascar, 1916-1919

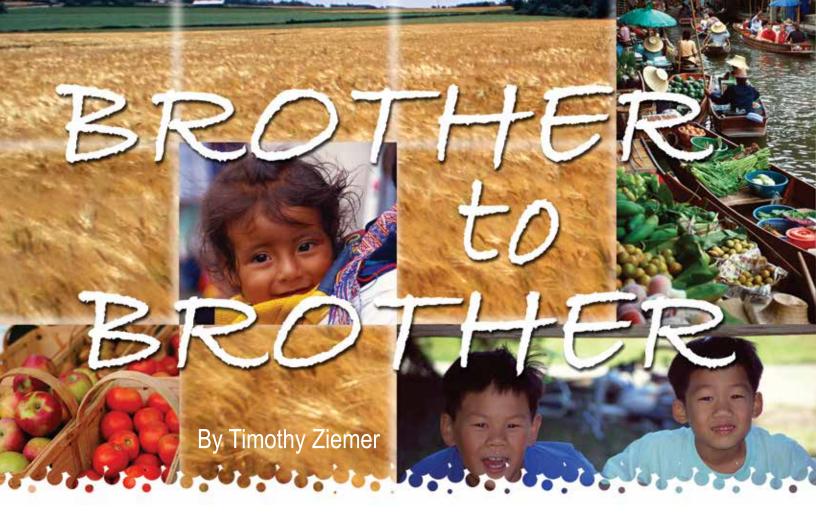
— Pastor Amos Dyrud Missionary to Madagascar, 1950-1969

Wherever there are folks with a little of the Christian light, you find a strong bond of friendship. It is hard to explain — but it is so evident. Color and language don't make any difference!

— Ovidie Dyrud Missionary to Madagascar, 1950-1969

There is a truth that the missionary life has taught me. And that is that pain and joy go hand in hand, for the child as well as the adult. That is true of all life, but perhaps the missionary life put this truth in a bolder and sharper perspective. It is life lived to the hilt — replete with joy and sorrow, laughter and lament.

> Louise Midthun Varberg Missionary to Madagascar and child of missionaries



chieng is dying of AIDS. Frail and weak, he lies on his bed soaked in sweat. He has no family to help him. But Ochieng has hope — the family of God.

Believers from a local congregation in Nairobi, Kenya, visit Ochieng every day. They have very little, yet they give compassion, comfort and spiritual encouragement. They bathe him, feed him and sweep the dirt floor. When these Christians talk to Ochieng about Jesus, he is eager to listen. This love is real.

Around the world, in the most desperate situations and dire circumstances, local congregations are shining the light of Christ ... eager to reach out and touch those whom Jesus called "the least of these."

In Iraq, a simple house provides refuge for a small congregation of persecuted Christians. Furnished with sofas and kerosene heaters, this modest sanctuary also provides a place of worship.

Each of the believers in this fledgling congregation has a story of suffering and strife ... a woman bears deep physical scars; others face death threats because they follow Jesus; the pastor — a former captain in the Iraqi army — confided: "Sometimes, we feel alone ... we long for believers from other nations to visit, to pray with us, to encourage us."

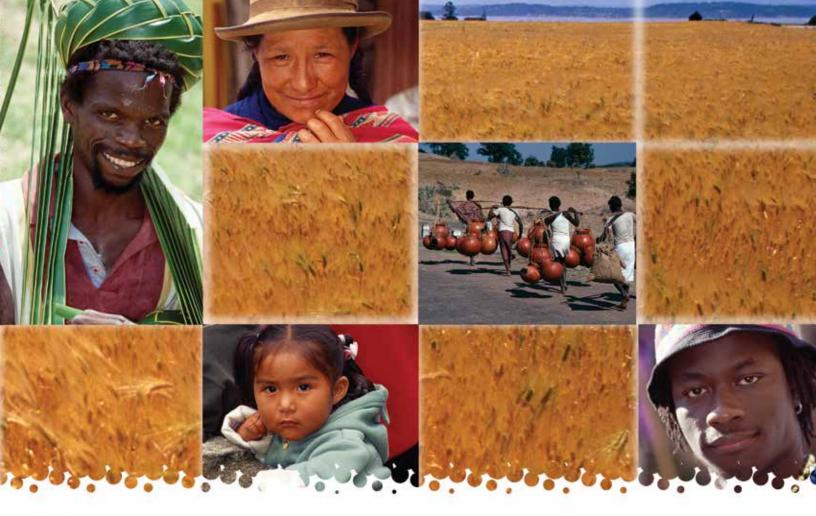
You'd think these courageous believers have enough problems of their own. Yet — like congregations worldwide — they have a vision to reach out to the suffering people around them. "We want to help orphans and the physically disabled," explained the pastor. "We want to show people our love ... to talk to them about real freedom, real peace in Jesus."

Growing up as a missionary kid in Vietnam, I realized the importance of reaching out to hurting people. My parents lived and served among the Montagnard tribal people — the poorest of the poor.

In 1968, when the communists attacked, my father was killed and my mother was seriously wounded. I will never forget that the Montagnard people carried my mother to the nearest hospital where she recovered. They were returning the compassion she had shown them.

Feeding the hungry, helping the persecuted, caring for the sick ... these are fundamental to the Church's mission to reach out to a lost world with the healing hands of Jesus.

The tragedy is that so many local congregations around the world are impoverished and overwhelmed by the suffering that surrounds them. These congregations desperately want to touch their neighbors for Jesus, but so often lack the



resources and the training.

That's where World Relief and Free Lutheran congregations step in. Wherever possible, we equip and empower local congregations to help the hurting in their communities, mobilizing local churches to respond to hunger, disasters, refugees and major health issues such as AIDS — providing a vibrant witness for Christ.

In Kigali, Rwanda, World Relief partners with the fast-growing Kagarama Friends Church, training youth leaders and counselors to promote AIDS awareness and operate a home care ministry. Reaching out into Kigali's AIDS-afflicted neighborhoods, the congregation shares biblical values of abstinence and fidelity in the local public schools.

Meanwhile, senior pastor Gaspard Karemera has a burden to see his congregation help heal the deep emotional wounds of Rwanda's genocide. In neighborhoods torn apart by ethnic distrust and hatred, the congregation plays a pivotal role in fostering peace and reconciliation, aided by World Relief's Bible-based counseling program.

World Relief believes passionately in the indigenous church — those local believers who have joined themselves together as self-governing congregations. With 60 years of experience behind us, we've found local congregations to be the most

effective channel for providing short-term aid and lasting community development.

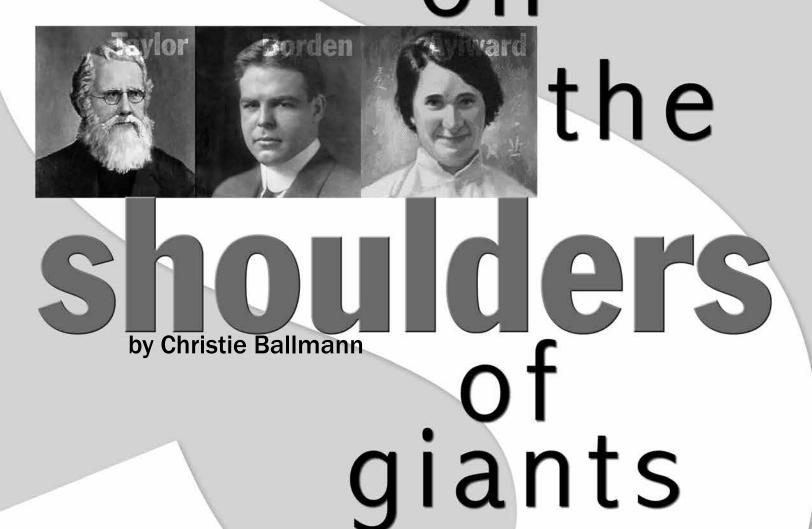
In disaster situations, local congregations provide central rallying points and highly efficient volunteer distribution networks; they understand the most urgent needs of their communities far better than "outsiders" — they simply need to be empowered to help.

Long-term, local congregations are *integral* in communities because local believers are committed to strengthening health infrastructures, food security and local economies over the long haul.

Free Lutheran congregations are a vital part of World Relief's mission: churches helping churches ... brother strengthening brother ... the way Jesus wants His Church to be!

Together, let's show the love of Jesus to our hurting world — and let's do it through His body, the local congregation.

Ziemer, a retired US Navy Rear Admiral, is the executive director of World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals. To learn more about World Relief's mission to help the hurting in partnership with local congregations, visit www. worldrelief.org.



>> "IF I HAVE SEEN further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." Sir Isaac Newton

n every generation there are a few who dare to trust God in extreme measure. They are men and women who sit still long enough to hear God's missionary heart and continue listening until they know how He would have them respond. They are ordinary people used by God in extraordinary ways to spread His glory among the nations.

I am blessed that my parents surrounded me with many such biblical and historical heroes and heroines growing up. Missionary stories were always a favorite. My father would sit on the bed with all us kids around him and read fascinating accounts of supernatural provision, protection, and conversion. Sometimes at night my mom would turn on dramatized audio biographies of missionaries and I would fall asleep dreaming I was learning Chinese with Hudson Taylor or leading orphans across the mountains with Gladys Aylward. As a little girl, their stories strongly shaped my view of God.

Over the years my appreciation for the practical insight and spiritual determination of these missionaries of faith has grown. We have the awesome privilege of being mentored by Christianity's great soul-winners! Studying their lives can enhance our own spiritual walk.

#### Heroes model faith

Scripture exhorts us to study faithful believers in order to stretch and grow the borders of our own faith. "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12). From the beginning, modeling a living, dynamic faith has been the primary method for transferring that same faith to the next generation.

Faithful missionaries are characterized by their commitment to the infallible Word of God and intercessory prayer. It is the dayspring of their missionary vision. It is the secret of their availability to shake the gates of hell. In the small requests and the big needs, in frozen wastelands and muggy jungles, missionaries of faith have seen God's promises put to extreme tests and have always found them infinitely strong and sweet. Their stories remind us that His grace is sufficient. His peace is beyond understanding. His Word is our richest treasure. Our faith grows.

#### Heroes cheer us on

When we are in the thick of a spiritual struggle or painful circumstance it is easy to lose sight of our end goal. God, in His mercy, doesn't intend for us to walk through these valleys alone. He has surrounded us with grandstands of witnesses to cheer us on the way and remind us of His greater perspective. They, too, struggled with loneliness, grieved over sin, and cried from broken hearts. Yet, in the end, they bear this witness: He is worthy, He is faithful, He is

Sovereign.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus ..." (Hebrews 12:1, 2a).

William Borden is one of those witnesses in my life. As heir to the multi-million dollar Borden Dairy Company, he shocked the world by leaving fame and fortune behind that he might share Jesus with Muslims in China. During his years of ministry preparation at Yale and Princeton, his zeal for the lost and his fervent prayer ministry transformed both college campuses. Just months after his ordination in 1912 and well-publicized departure to China, 26-year-old Borden contracted spinal meningitis and died. At the back of his Bible was written this statement: "No retreats, no reserves, no regrets."

Though seen as a waste in the world's terms, both his life and his death continue to challenge me to hand over all those temporal toys and amusements that hinder total consecration. His model shows me the beautiful, eternal fruit of dying to self that I might live unto Christ.

#### Heroes invite our participation

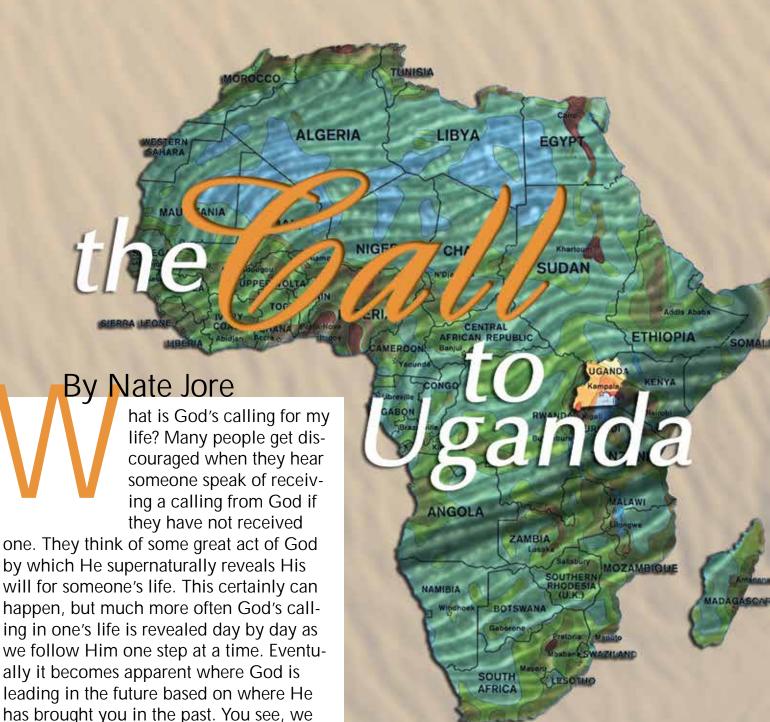
#### in the Kingdom cause

Reading the journals, letters, and stories of persevering missionaries reveals practical ways we can be involved in God's kingdom work wherever we are. There is an unfinished task left to our generation. How will we cooperate with God in *His* ongoing mission?

A crucial part of our calling is intercession on behalf of our missionaries. As we study the lives and faith of these missionary heroes, the more fervently we are able to co-labor in prayer with and for those on the field today.

Remember, we each have a unique race marked out just for us. God's specific assignment for my life will not be the same as that of my heroes. Nor will yours. Yet the possibilities of our ministry are no less incredible than those who have gone before. These giants of the missionary movement remind us that God still desires to perform miracles for His name's sake through ordinary men and women ready to expect and attempt great things for God.

Ballmann is a member of Word of Truth Free Lutheran, Kopperl, Texas. Two faith-building missionary stories she recommends are "Evidence Not Seen," by Darleen Deibler Rose and "God's Smuggler," by John and Elizabeth Sherrill.



My own calling has come over a period of time as God has patiently prepared me for it. I count it a great blessing to have grown up in Brazil, where my parents are still serving as Wycliffe missionaries.

have all received a calling: to go and make disciples. The exciting thing is that we are each called to do that in a different

setting.

Growing up in that setting opened my eyes to the spiritual needs of lost people who did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel unless someone came to them. My parents never pushed us kids toward missions, but taught us to seek the Lord and His will for our lives.

Throughout my late teenage years, the Lord began to kindle in my heart a real love for ministry. This began my senior year of high school, as I was able to lead a Bible study for the rest of my classmates at a small school for missionary kids in Cuiabá, Brazil. Following high school, I attended AFLBS and there, again, found many opportunities to lead Bible studies and preach. During my second year at AFLBS, I began to sense a calling to go to seminary and serve in some sort of ministry position in a church. It was also during this time that I received a call from Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park, Pa., to serve as youth director. Following AFLBS, I spent two years at Ruthfred, and the Lord confirmed again His calling to me to ministry through opportunities to shepherd the youths there.

I returned to Minnesota in August of 2001 with the goal of finishing my bachelor's degree and then go on to seminary at AFLTS. It was during that year that the Lord began to redirect my passion to the mission field. The need for missionaries was great, and there was nothing hindering me from going. The specific call to Africa came in Christmas 2001, when my wife, Rhoda (Monseth), and I traveled to Brazil to visit my family. During our time there, we traveled to visit Connely and Carolyn Dyrud in Campo Mourão. It was the first time that I had seen the AFLC mission work in Brazil. While visiting with Connely one afternoon, he spoke of a Lutheran group in Mozambique, a Portuguese-speaking country, which had requested someone to come and help them start a seminary for their church leaders. It had been six years since the invitation and no one had gone to help them. My heart caught fire. I thought, "Why hasn't anyone gone?" I wanted to go and help them that very day.

As I began to prepare for seminary, I learned of a large number of applicants from Africa who were unable to come to seminary due to finances and the difficulty of obtaining visas. I also learned that the AFLC already had contacts in Uganda and Tanzania and was prayerfully considering beginning a semi nary in that region. This kind of a calling really seemed to fit well with the gifts that the Lord has given me.

Another confirmation of the Lord's calling in my life came through my marriage to Rhoda. She has always had a heart for the mission field, which has grown through her various opportunities to travel on short-term mission trips. Rhoda is greatly gifted in relational skills, and she has great love and compas-



Nate and Rhoda Jore have been accepted by the World Mission Committee as missionary candidates. Being accepted as a missionary candidate is one of the first steps toward being called as an AFLC missionary.

The Jore's live on the AFLC Schools campus where Nate is the men's resident head at AFLBS. He is a senior at AFLTS this year. Nate and Rhoda had their first child, Elijah, this summer.

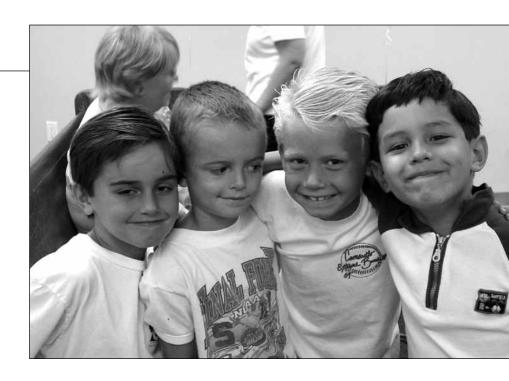
The World Missions Committee would appreciate any comments you may have concerning the Jores. Comments can be sent to: AFLC World Missions, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441, or email worldmis@aflc.org.

sion for people. It is clear to us that the Lord has brought us together because we will be more effective together than separate individuals.

In August of 2003, Rhoda and I traveled with the AFLC team to visit Uganda and Tanzania. While we were in Uganda, it seemed very evident why God was calling us to minister in that area. The need for biblical training is great and the hunger is tremendous. The people are anxious to hear the gospel, but have little opportunity for instruction in the Word of God. Because of a lack of biblical instruction and knowledge, many of the believers there mix their Christianity with traditional animistic beliefs.

The need is great, the door is open, and the opposition is strong. We do covet your prayers as we plan to head to Uganda as early as 2006. Though we recognize many challenges ahead of us and much opposition, we are excited at the possibility of ministering in Uganda.

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." — Matthew 9:37



# summ*er*[s/ of ministry

his summer God allowed me to be a part of an AFLBS summer team again, my second year with the Southern Barnabas team. I was able to see so many things.

In 2003, I had the privilege of helping with a church being built in Mesa, Ariz. I would like to say that I helped build the church, but I never touched any kind of building tool. I did, however, kill a lot of weeds and throw away trash. Only God knew that I would teach VBS in that same building this summer.

I was excited when I found

out that I was going to be returning to Mesa. That week turned out to be a big highlight for our team. The congregation had been praying for VBS that God would send kids to the church. Fifteen children came that week. When people asked us how many kids came, we would tell them, thinking they would be disappointed. Instead, they were excited. Cal-

By Christina Berge

vary Free Lutheran normally doesn't have many children attending church, so they were so thankful for any kids God brought to them.

That really made me think. I shouldn't be worried about numbers at churches we work at. Instead, I should focus on each child who comes. That week a whole class received Jesus as their Savior. It was the most exciting week we had all summer. Those kids just soaked everything in. They were amazed by the whole gospel lesson. When they were told that Jesus, this perfect man, died on the cross because of our sins, the faces of those kids just fell. Then we got to tell them the good news about how He rose again. Every child in that class gasped in shock. After we read every story to them, they could repeat the whole story back. They were just on fire! I was encouraged by the way those kids reacted to the gospel. It humbled me and made me think about how I should wake up every morning in complete awe of what Jesus has done for me.

Our team motto this summer was, "Be flexible." As in Pastor Paul Nash's famous last words, "Hey, I am going to need you guys to be flexible." As the AFLC Home Missions director in charge of our team, he was sure right about that. We went from week to week not knowing what ages we would be teaching, how many kids we were going to have, where we were going to have all of our class rooms at, etc. For instance, Faith Free Lutheran in Bertrand, Neb., doesn't yet have a building. Instead, we had VBS in a community center, with all of the

classes in the same room. It worked out really well. God knew, of course, what was for the best. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Not everything goes according to one's plan, but according to God's plan.

It was great this summer to see congregations get involved with ministry, too. I don't think that I have ever seen a more involved church than Faith Lutheran in Metropolis, Ill. That week was so encouraging to me. The congregation had a class for every age group, including an adult class and even a high school class. The adults sang along with the songs we did for opening and closing, proving that adults can learn just as much as children do. It is important that, even as adults, we still learn more about Jesus and keep seeking Him.

I now attend North Dakota State University in Fargo. During a recent Campus Crusades meeting, a video showed random people on campus being questioned about whom they think God is. Most said that God is love, powerful, the Creator, etc. There was one foreign exchange student who said that he didn't know what to think of God because he doesn't know anything about religion. He never heard much about God in his country. God commands us as Christians to be missionaries for Him. He says in Matthew 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to





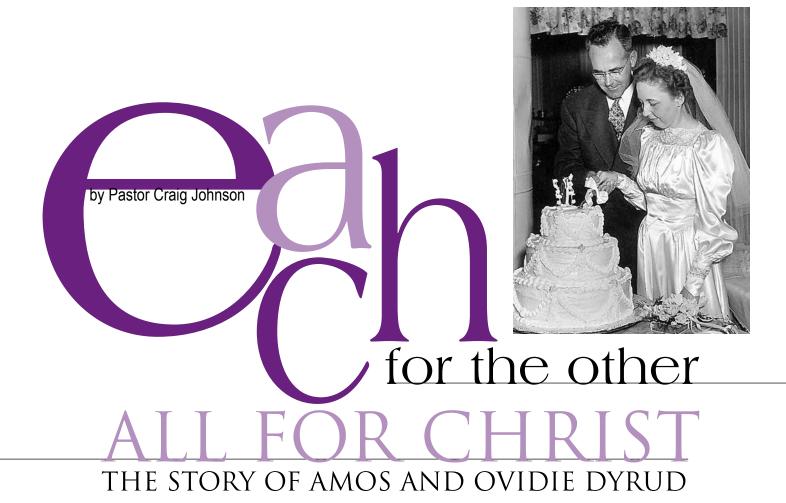
TOP: Malea Russum plays with VBS kids in Camarillo, Calif.

ABOVE: Christina Berge teaches a VBS class.

obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." What a promise!

This summer was such an awesome experience for me and I am so thankful that God gave me an opportunity to serve on a summer team again. It made me realize the importance of sending out missionaries to harvest the fields.

Berge is a member of Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore, N.D.



SOME THINGS CHANGE. Other things stay the same.

I was reminded of that as I read the book, "Each for the Other, All for Christ: Missionaries to Madagascar — Rev. Amos and Ovidie Dyrud."

The recently published book, written by the Dyrud's nephew, Loiell Dyrud, and their niece, Leola Dyrud Furman, is a biography of Pastor Amos and Ovidie with an emphasis on their years of service as missionaries in Madagascar. It serves also as a history of Lutheran Free Church mission work in Madagascar.

Reading about missionary life in the early and

mid 1900s, it is clear many things have changed since then. The Dyruds first went to Madagascar in 1950. They returned to the States to serve in 1969. Describing their return trip, "Travel had improved so much in 20 years that the trip now took a couple days that had taken weeks when they first came out" (p. 228).

Now missionaries can communicate instantly with friends and family around the world by e-mail. Then communication was done by mail that took two weeks. Now missionaries often receive visitors from the United States. Then it was a rare event.

Something that was quite common for mission-



The book is full of pictures depicting life in Madagascar. A few of them included in the book are (from left) Pastor Amos Dyrud pictured with a group of Bible school graduates; Ovidie prepares meals in a guest house for children Peter, Becky and Naomi during a *tournee* or speaking tour; and Ovidie teaches sewing lessons.

aries in the early 1900s was serious health problems. "One cannot avoid a profound sense of sadness when reading the early accounts of the Madagascar mission field. ... The death toll was enormous. During the early years of the LFC mission, death and disease had decimated the missionary ranks to the extent that for every three missionaries sent, two, it seems, either died or were forced to return to the United States in broken health. And yet there never seemed to be a shortage of those who heeded the call though for some it meant almost certain death" (p. 68).

While missionaries, from time to time, still deal with health concerns, we give thanks for a significant reduction in the numbers who must come home because of broken health.

Some things have changed, and yet we hope that some other things have and will always remain the same.

As we read the Dyruds' story, look at their letters, and hear the stories of others they served with on the mission field, a sense of commitment and a willingness to sacrifice is clear. They put up with inconveniences. They faced life in a new culture and country. They endured tearful and long separations from family and friends. They missed numerous special occasions in the lives of their extended family members. They encountered dangers. They paid a price in order to serve, but it was "all for Christ."

Hopefully God can use this book to inspire a new generation to have a similar commitment. May it be said of us as it was of them, "And yet there never seemed to be a shortage of those who heeded the call, though for some it meant almost certain death."

There is still great need. In the more than 50 years since the Dyruds first went to Madagascar, many other missionaries have gone

throughout the world. The good news of Jesus has been proclaimed far and wide. Yet there are still many who have never heard. And those who have never heard of Christ's death and resurrection are still lost and in great need of the Savior. The truth has not changed: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them" (Romans 10:14).

Many of us have known and appreciated the Dyruds for years and have been blessed by their ministry at the

AFLC schools. This book gives us a chance to learn a little bit more about an earlier chapter in the lives of our dear friends. It also gives us the opportunity to learn more about our heri-

tage as Free Lutherans and how a passion for missions is at the heart of our heritage. May a concern for missions be something about us that never changes.

"Each for the Other, All for Christ" may be purchased for \$15 from Ambassador Publications, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441; phone (763) 545-5631. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Free Lutheran Seminary.



# ACOOKBOOK

for missions

By the Cookbook Committee at Maranatha Free Lutheran



ne day last winter a few ladies from Maranatha Free Lutheran Church, Glyndon, Minn., were visiting over coffee and the topic of cookbooks came up. "It would be really fun to have a cookbook that contains the recipes people often bring to our church dinners," said one of the ladies. That comment triggered the creation of our recently published "Recipes from the Heart" cookbook. The Lord has showered His blessing upon this project and us.

The first decision our committee made was to dedicate the profits from the cookbook to missions. That deci-\$ion was committed to the Lord as we sought His guidance and direction in selecting mission projects to support. Two months, numerous prayers, and a few hours of research later, two projects were impressed on our minds. Locally, we decided to support the Salvation Army, and internationally our profits would go to the Hutnik Parish Center of the Trinec congregation in the Czech Republic.

The Lord laid on our hearts that He didn't only want our congregation to give monetarily to these projects, but He also wanted us to get involved with our hearts and put "feet to our faith."

Starting last May, we prepare and serve the Sunday evening meal once per month at the Salvation Army. We have learned that some of our perceptions about the individuals who eat at the dining center were incorrect. Not all people who come to eat are homeless and unemployed. Some of them live in shelters or have their own apartment. Some have jobs and just don't make enough to pay for everything. Coming to the dining center saves them from having to purchase groceries.

Over the past few months we have come to know some of the diners by name and have learned their life stories. We have seen our Savior touch their lives because we are willing to let God's love shine through us.

Serving at the Salvation Army has been a blessed time of fellowship as multiple generations work together to prepare and serve the meals, from 3 to 75 years of age. Each time we have seen the Lord richly reward His servants for our investment in furthering the Kingdom of Christ.

A typical evening includes someone preparing the spaghetti sauce while someone else is cooking the pasta, and still others peeling the cucumbers for the lettuce salad. Others wash tables, scrub floors, or visit with the diners, handing them silverware and refilling their water glasses. Each time we serve, someone from our congregation shares a devotional and encouragement from the Bible, and we also sing a gospel song for them. It blesses our hearts to see several of the diners singing with us or to see a gentleman take off his cap and bow his head in reverence during the prayer before dinner. We have learned that just because someone's clothes may not be the same style as ours or their mental capacity is different doesn't mean that God loves or cares for

them any less than for those of us serving the meal. Reaching outside of our congregation to help people not part of our normal daily routine has enhanced our awareness of God's whole family.

In Matthew 25: 40 the Lord says, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

A portion of our cookbook profits will be used to purchase a new convection oven for the Salvation Army. When the business manager told us they have been seeking the funding for the oven for nearly three years, it was the Lord's confirmation to us that He has us were He wants us. We are privileged to be involved in missions work within our own community. Praise the Lord for revealing this to us!

Internationally, our cookbook profits will be used to purchase kitchen equipment for the Hutnik Parish Center, which is being remodeled by the Trinec Lutheran Church. The facility has been a longtime dream of that congregation for evangelism and youth outreach in their city of 45,000 people.

lives because we are We are excited willing to let God's to partner with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Czech through us. Republic in a very tangible way. We have started to communicate with them about their needs for a stove, refrigerators, and sinks in their new kitchen. Our goal is to build a spiritual and emotional bond between our congregations. Our desire is to exchange prayer concerns and share joys with our brothers and sisters in

The Lord took a simple idea generated over a cup of coffee and turned it into a mission project. Maranatha is reaching beyond Glyndon to share our hearts and the love of Jesus Christ through our cookbook for missions.

Maranatha Free Lutheran Church. Glyndon, Minn., is served by Pastor Dale Finstrom.

Over

the past few

months we have

some of the diners

by name and have

stories. We have seen

our Savior touch their

learned their life

love shine

come to know

#### [FLY]

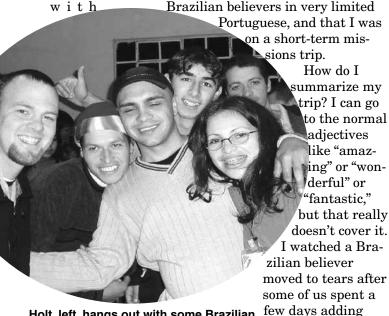
# Ears of my HEART

#### **Developing A Heart for Missions**

By Pastor Jason Holt

stood outside Paul and Becky Abel's hilltop home in southern Brazil and thought to myself, "Am I really here?" More than two years of praying and waiting on the Lord's direction had brought a group of 19 of us from across the Midwest to this point. We were spending 19 days in Brazil.

It had been only three days since we left Minneapolis, and my mind still could not wrap itself around the reality that I was standing in the presence of missionaries who I had been praying for, that I was talking



Holt, left, hangs out with some Brazilian counselors and campers during a teen camp at the ARCA on July 22.

observed three congregations worship the Lord and hear His Word with a great joy for the family of God. I developed a deep appreciation for the ministry of the ARCA as I saw firsthand many souls come to faith in Jesus. I watched children from the Miriam Infant Home forget the cares of this world by flying kites in an open area at the Mission compound near Campo Mourão. I watched our long-term missionaries glorify Jesus and serve others with patience and tenacity.

boards to the out-

modest home. I

side wall of her very

These experiences are mine for eternity ... and they can be yours, too!

Have you ever considered a short-term missions trip? ARCA hosted a teen camp while we were in Brazil. The theme verse was taken from part of Hebrews 3:15: "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your

hearts." This verse is a quotation from Psalm 95, which reflects on the Israelites' experience in the wilderness. The author of Hebrews uses this idea to present a warning on the pitfalls of unbelief. It is first a warning on falling away from a personal relationship with Jesus, but it does have an application on falling away from following the Lord in obedience. This verse grabbed my attention; my heart should be quick to listen to God's Word. The "ears" of my heart should be tuned in to Jesus' voice.

So what does that mean for the Great Commission? It directs us to be active in it.

How can we be? We definitely are called to be Great Commission people in our local communities, but we also can be in a global sense as well. One way to do this is a mission trip. But know this: it has been my observation that a couple of things often come first.

Consider three steps toward developing a heart for missions:

**Pray!** Pray for our AFLC missionaries. Pray for the local congregations. Pray for open doors.

**Give!** Raise support for World Missions. Evaluate designated giving for missionaries' support.

**Go!** Start a discussion in your local church about a short-term missions trip. See how the Lord leads. (By the way, the fourth step is sending. I am told as the first three steps unfold, more and more people become open to full-time Christian service on the missions field.)

This column was given to me as the FLY president. Our theme for the July 4-9, 2005, convention is "Rescue." I noticed that Brazilian and American teens have a ton in common. There are pressures to conform to others' ideas, questions about who they are growing up to be, and challenges about faith and living out their faith. We all need the rescue that Jesus delivers.

For teens, I have two thoughts: "Come and Go!" Come to the FLY Convention. Go on a mission trip. I watched the Lord give our group (ranging in ages from 9-64) a real heart for missions. Let me know how the Lord leads you ... and keep your "ears" open.

Holt is the associate pastor of Youth & Family Ministry at Calvary Free Lutheran in Fergus Falls, Minn.

# Olsons@ Tanzania

One last goodbye at Minneapolis International Airport on Aug. 15.

Nathan and Pam tie balloon pets for the children.

#### Nathan:

Last October my dad came home from work and said he had a "surprise" for us. After much begging and

pleading, my dad finally gave in and said with a heart-warming smile, "We've been invited to go to Tanzania."

At first, I was thinking, "Vacation time, yes!" Then I remembered that Tanzania isn't a resort, but a country in Africa. I slowly asked, "Dad, are you thinking about going to Africa?"

Three months later I was telling my dad and God: "Why missions? Why

Africa? Why nine months? At the most could it be nine weeks?"

Then one night I was going through my devos and came to the chapter where Jesus is giving the Great Commission. Jesus said to His disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations." To me that said, "Nathan, go and make disciples of all nations, even Tanzania."

Since then my attitude has changed and I've just been looking forward to the trip and how I can make a difference for Jesus.

Pam and Naomi in



Andrew makes his own musical instrument out of the local produce.

#### Andrew:

I am looking forward to the adventure in Africa, like following in the steps of David Livingston, cutting through the deep African jungle with my machete. Or just making grass huts in the hot savanna.

Living in Waama will be an adjustment. There is only two hours of electricity at night. Some things we have done to prepare for that are battery efficient electronics. So I thought, maybe I could buy a solar-powered generator. The problem is it would produce electricity only on sunny days. So I hooked it up to a power supply that had a battery and a power converter.

One Bible verse that has meant a lot to me is Psalm 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." That means God will be my lamp on the paths, and maybe even into the jungles of Africa.



Kevin sends out emails from the Internet "closet" at Mbulu.

#### Naomi:

Habari! This means hello in Swahili, the national language of Tanzania where my family and I will be living for nine months. When I first found out I was going to Tanzania, I was mad. I was afraid I would lose my friends. However, Jesus led me through with a verse, John 1:12: "To those who receive Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." I know God will be watching over me because I am His child.

### **WMF**

# DISCOVERY

But now, what seemed to be for the first time, she had heard that there were children — and their moms and dads — who didn't know Jesus.

he child sat still, though most of the others had left the room. She was unaware of the activity around her, lost in the exciting story she had just heard. As Mrs. Erickson observed her, she could tell that the child was deeply moved, and she went over and sat down beside her.

Janie turned to her with a puzzled look and asked, "What can I do?"

They were sitting in the basement of the church Janie attended, and Mrs. Erickson had just finished telling the Sunday school about living and working as a missionary in Bolivia. It was hard to understand where Bolivia was, but even harder to understand why the people the children — didn't know Jesus.

Janie had always known about Jesus. She knew wonderful stories about His life: how He helped everyone, healed terrible diseases; how He was always telling the people about His Father God, who had created the whole world. Why! She had even heard how He had made a friend alive again!

Mom and Dad took Janie and her sisters to Sunday school and church every Sunday, and she loved to sing the songs ... she had picked one as her very favorite: "My Jesus I Love Thee I Know Thou Art Mine."

But now, what seemed to be for the

first time, she had heard that there were children — and their moms and dads who didn't know Jesus. Many had never had a chance to hear the wonderful Bible stories.

As she sat beside Mrs. Erickson and asked what she could do. Mrs. Erickson told her that she could pray everyday that the Lord would send more people to Bolivia — and other places also — to tell about Jesus' love for them and how He wanted all people everywhere to love Him and be His children, to go to live with Him in heaven forever.

Yes, Janie promised, she would pray that prayer!

Over the next few years Janie had many more opportunities to hear missionaries at her church telling of their work in Africa, India, Ecuador, Mexico. They showed slides of the people, sometimes sitting in a little church, sometimes just sitting outside on the grass, some getting help because they were sick, sometimes there would be stories of babies dying because their parents couldn't get help in time. Most wonderful of all would be the stories of how the people would come to know Jesus as their Savior. Through all of this Janie remembered her promise to pray that more people would want to go and tell the story of Jesus' wonderful love.

he above is one missionary's story ... a story of her awakening as a child to the truth that there are those who have not yet had the privilege of hearing the good news about Jesus, a story she had known and loved all her childhood. This experience with Mrs. Erickson was the first in a series of missionary stories Janie heard that formulated her life's work, her calling to be a missionary herself.

As the Lord used Mrs. Erickson's talk in Janie's life, I know He has given many valuable experiences to those whom He has called to work in missions, experiences that must be shared with the church. The Parish Education Board is presently collecting stories from AFLC members who have had cross-cultural experiences for the purpose of publication as a family devotional book or a Sunday school resource. The WMF will be helping to fund this important

project, with a goal for publishing in 2006.

Fern Bohling and I are coordinating this project. We invite anyone interested to contact one of us and we will give you the guidelines set up for these stories. We know there are great stories based on life-changing experiences, and we encourage you to share them with us. Like Janie, they may even direct someone's life. We know they will be a blessing in our homes, around our family table, and in our Sunday schools.

> — Clara Gunderson Sunnyside Lutheran Stacy, Minn.

For more information, contact Clara at rcgunderson@aol.com or Fern Bohling at thebohlingteam@pngusa.net



#### [World Missions]

**By Pastor Connely Dyrud** Campo Mourão, Brazil

**AMECAM** program serves Brazilian teens in trouble

y head hurts so much, can you help me?" Jose asked the nurse, as he slipped in and out of a coma. The small teenager lay suffering with a bullet in his head. That evening Jose slipped into eternity. The nurses stood by his bed crying. Why had that little slum boy affected them so much? The reason is unbelievable! His biggest concern was their spiritual well being, not his living or dying.

When we met him, Jose was small, quick and feared. He was well known for his mean streak. He knew how to use a knife effectively. He also had a bad drug habit. The police had put him in jail, but the juvenile judge thought the AFLC-run recuperation center (AME-CAM) was a better place for Jose.

It was a good choice because, for the first time, Jose was treated like a person. He was told that he was responsible for his deeds, but Jesus would forgive him of his sins if he asked for forgiveness.

Within a week Jose had given his heart and life to Jesus. His

outlook on life had changed 100 percent. Before his conversion, when people talked to him he wouldn't answer. He just pulled his cap over his eyes and became more withdrawn. Now he was laughing, talking and happy. He talked openly about Jesus with his fellow AMECAM teens.

Then everything changed. Two weeks after Jose accepted Christ as his Savior, he was called over to his friend's house to see a .38 caliber pistol that an uncle had left behind. The neighbor boy thought the gun was harmless. They took the clip out, but there was a bullet in the chamber. The gun went off and the bullet lodged in the head of Jose. He was taken to the hospital; surgery was impossible as the bullet was too deep in his brain for local doctors to remove.

Little Jose is with Jesus today. In those few days that he enjoyed a new life with new hope, he touched many people who had known him as a teen with criminal tendencies heading for a hopeless future.

We would like to remind you today to pray daily for the AFLC youth ministries in Brazil. AMECAM is our teen recuperation center reaching out to 60 troubled teens. Pray also for our Bible school and seminary, with some 30 students who work with the troubled teens and their home situation in Campo Mourão.

### Come take a trip with World Missions video

The World Missions Department has developed a way to share with you what you are doing around the world. We have produced a DVD that will take you on a trip to each country, giving you some of the highlights of the work there.

You will find the video interesting and enjoyable to watch. The menus are divided up into fields of work and topics so that you can choose from what you want to look at or have time to view. The video is also available on VHS format, although the segments will not be as easily accessed on videotape. The segments are appropriate to be used in WMF meetings, Sunday schools, worship services, youth gatherings and missions meetings.

Copies are available upon request. It is our plan that every church would desire a copy of the video. Individuals or groups can also get a copy by contacting the mission office. Request a copy at:

**AFLC World Missions** 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55441 worldmis@aflc.org

We are excited about the DVD and hope that you will use it to go on a trip with us and view your mission work in the near future.

# Welcome Trinity Parish

#### Zap congregation celebrates centennial

n 1920, members of St. Paul Lutheran, Dodge, N.D., joined Golgotha Lutheran of Golden Valley to form Zion Lutheran Parish. Seventy-three years later, the parish added another congregation, Immanuel Lutheran of Zap, to form Trinity Lutheran Parish.

The oldest congregation, Immanuel Lutheran, celebrated its centennial this year. The congregation was formed in 1904 and was a part of the American Lutheran Church (ALC). They later merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Joining a parish was a big adjustment for the congregation. Now, however, it is a blessing. Relationships with the new partners has grown with new friendships, joint worship services and a close community that is networked in helping each other. Current membership at Immanuel Lutheran is 133 baptized and 105 confirmed.

St. Paul Lutheran, located on the west edge of Dodge along Highway 200, was organized April 24, 1910, in a schoolhouse in the country north of Dodge. Like Immanuel Lutheran, the congregation was first affiliated with the ALC and later with the ELCA. The congregation joined Golgotha Lutheran in 1920 to form Zion Parish. Although the congregations were separate, they shared a pastor. Disaster struck the church in 1923 by a tornado and 1945 by a fire, demolishing the structure both times. In 1947, the congregation purchased a church building, and it was moved to the present location. St. Paul's current membership is 72 baptized and 59 confirmed members.

Golgotha Lutheran Church of Golden Valley, N.D., was organized in 1914. The congregation was a member of the ALC and later joined with the ELCA. Current membership is 210 baptized and 172 confirmed members. Members were not in favor of the liberal stands the ELCA has with many issues. They voted in March to join the AFLC along with members of St. Paul Lutheran and Immanuel Lutheran. Our mission is to provide a strong relationship with Christ through our new AFLC family.

The women of Trinity Parish are the cornerstone of the small churches and communities through their many works: quilting, serving for events, outreach and donations.

The younger children are active in Sunday school, VBS and provide

LEFT: Immanuel Lutheran Church, Zap, N.D. MIDDLE: Golgotha Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, N.D. BOTTOM: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dodge, N.D.



music during the service. Members of Golgotha Lutheran are blessed to have a group of teenaged youths, "Christians in Action," in their congregation. This year they have sent care packages to soldiers serving from our community. The parish Luther League is very active.

We are excited to explore and study God's Word with our churches in our new affiliation with the AFLC.

# Pastor Mauritz Lundeen became pastor after years of farming

Pastor Mauritz Lundeen, 81, of Brandon, Minn., died Aug. 12 at his home. Born Sept. 14, 1922, near Nelson, Minn., he was the son of Axel and Rena Moren Lundeen. He married Idella Haugen Sept. 4, 1949, in Elbow Lake, Minn.

He graduated from Alexandria High School in 1940 and farmed. He entered the ministry at the age of 50, and was ordained by the AFLC in 1976. He served Grace Free and Rice Free Lutheran congregations in Bagley, Minn. In 1987 he served as pastor at Grace Free Lutheran, Aberdeen, S.D. He retired in 1990 and served as interim pastor at Minnewaska Lutheran, Starbuck, Minn.

Surviving are his wife; four sons, Calvin Lundeen, Marc (Susan) Lundeen, Paul Lundeen, and Richard Lundeen; three daughters, Beata Lundeen, Mary Lundeen and Kari (James) Caldwell; one brother, Herb (Sylvia) Lundeen; one sister, Kay Young; and 13 grandchildren.

The service was Aug. 17 at Calvary Lutheran, Alexandria, Minn., with the Rev. Keith Forrester, the Rev. Todd Klemme and the Rev. Robert Lee officiating. Burial was in Fahlun Lutheran Cemetery, Nelson, Minn.

## Georg Sverdrup society announces meeting

The annual meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society will be held Oct. 9 at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Fargo, N.D. Dr. James Hamre, Sverdrup biographer and translator, will be the special speaker. A buffet luncheon will begin at noon, followed by the meeting at 1 p.m. For more information, contact Pastor Martin Horn at (507) 789-5851 or Loiell Dyrud at (218) 681-6964.

#### **Summer missions in Alaska**

#### Swansons on two-month sabbatical in Naknek

Groups from Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., and Dell Lutheran, Frost, Minn., traveled to Naknek, Alaska, this summer to encourage mission work there. Eight men from Helmar and 12 men and women from Dell installed new windows in Naknek Lutheran Church, built a Sunday school addition to a church in South Naknek, a native community across the Naknek River, and finished small projects and maintenance in the churches and at KAKN Christian Radio.

The churches and KAKN are ministries of the Lutheran Mission Societies. AFLC Pastor Tom Olson, Cloquet, Minn., serves as president of LMS.

Pastor Jeff Swanson, his wife, Jane, and four of their six children were given a twomonth sabbatical beginning in October from Helmar Lutheran to work with the LMS ministry in Naknek and South Naknek.

There are needs for gospel ministry in many native villages in this part of Alaska as well as other parts of





TOP: Members of Helmar Lutheran, from left: Vic Stott, Steve Underwood, Don Funte, Pastor Jeff Swanson, Noel Cryder, Matt Stott, Dwight Bowman and Steve Bunge. BOTTOM: Members of Dell Lutheran, Frost, Minn. Front row: Mari Simmons, Tim Passer, Nathan Tungland, Eythan Frandle, Karen Olson, Neil Legatt. Back row: Brad Wermedal, Pastor Henry Mohagen (missionary), Jon Wiersma, Wayne Kallenburg, Wayne Olson, Sharon Perrine, Glen Perrine, Doug Niesen (interim Missionary).

Alaska and the far eastern Russia. Pray for the LMS as they seek God's direction and pursue open doors for future ministry.

Pastor Henry Mohagen has accepted a call to serve Slim Buttes Lutheran, Reva, S.D. The Mohagens had been on loan to the Lutheran Mission Societies to work in Naknek and South Naknek, Alaska.

**Lay pastor Glenn Frecks** was installed Sept. 19 as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Bertrand, Neb.

**Karisa Finstrom** has accepted a position as youth worker at St. John's Lutheran, Duluth, Minn. Finstrom was a 2004 graduate of the Ministry Training Institute's youth ministry program.

**Pastor Ivars Krafts** has retired as pastor of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis. Serving the congregation on an interim basis is **Pastor Eugene Enderlein**.

**Jeremy Erickson** has accepted a call to work as a full-time director of student ministries at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

**Pastor Rodger Olson** has resigned as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif., and has moved to Tioga, N.D.

## **Our President Writes**

o invitation was received in June for the next annual conference, which left the decision in the hands of our conference committee, consisting of the AFLC president and secretary. Several possibilities were presented, and the decision was made to accept an invitation from the Grace and Zion congregations, Valley City, N.D., to host the 2005 Annual Conference on the campus of the state university there. Hopefully the other congregations who

Robert Lee

offered to serve our fellowship in this way, to whom we are very grateful, will consider an invitation for a future year.

The conference com-

mittee made a second decision, in consultation with members of the Coordinating Committee, to accept an invitation from the congregations of the Pacific Northwest District to host the 2006 Annual Conference at the Warm Beach Conference Center in Stanwood, Wash. This follows the tradition of our confer-

ence meeting on the West Coast every 10 years, and will probably mean that the dates will be set one week later than usual due to school schedules in Washington. It was necessary to make a commitment at this time due to the need for reserving the conference center, which reminds us again of the importance of receiving invitations at least two years in advance.

A change in the conference schedule for next year is also in the planning stages. Once again this year we

# Conferences planned, changes proposed

experienced a major "weekend exodus" at our conference, leaving only a fraction of the attendees to conduct important business on Saturday — and seeing only a tiny increase in registration from some who are free of work responsibilities to come on Saturday and Sunday. Thus, we plan to open the 2005 Annual Conference on Tuesday evening, June 14, and to conclude with a Friday evening service on June 17.

Will this create an inconvenience for some? Perhaps for a few, but the input received has been overwhelmingly in favor of such a change, and it is abundantly clear that a large majority of the people who attend the conferences, both laity and pastors, apparently prefer to go back to their home congregations for the weekend. People are voting with their feet, year after year, and I am convinced that it is time for us to listen to them in our future planning.

Other suggestions have been made about "streamlining" the conference in various ways, including fewer and condensed reports, and I hope that you will feel free to convey your suggestions and concerns to the conference committee as future plans take shape. This is your conference, of course, and it must be planned in light of present realities and future needs, respectful of past traditions, to be the spiritual powerhouse our forefathers envisioned.

#### **August memorials**

**AFLBS:** Mildred Sunvold, Brigette Taylor, Oliver Moen

**AFLTS:** Oliver Moen, Merle Knutson (2), Hattie Goettsch, Gertie Olson, Rev. Palmer Wold. Rev. Mauritz Lundeen

General Fund: Mayme Erickson
Parish Education: Lillian Peterson
Home Missions: Myrtle Mickelson, Olivia
Hestdalen, Misty Kummer, Donald Strand
Vision 2004: Oliver Moen, Brigette Taylor,
Olive Bohn

WMF: Emily Solberg, Faye Paulson, Lorraine Johnson

... in honor of **AFLBS and Vision 2004** Hazel Holland

#### **Association of Free Lutheran Congregations**

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (8 months) - January 1 - August 31, 2004

| FUND             | TOTAL<br>Subsidy | REC'D IN<br>AUGUST | TOTAL REC'D<br>TO DATE | %<br>TOTAL |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Cononal Frond    | \$000 <b>771</b> | ¢17 977            | ¢101 500               | CC         |
| General Fund     | \$288,771        | \$17,377           | \$191,562              |            |
| Youth Ministries | 54,024           | 3,492              | 39,860                 | 74         |
| Parish Education | 82,062           | 7,864              | 56,564                 | 69         |
| Seminary         | 154,195          | 9,460              | 133,120                | 86         |
| Bible School     | 264,089          | 22,985             | 216,197                | 82         |
| Home Missions    | 287,115          | 38,760             | 178,065                | 62         |
| Church Extension | 24,576           | 1,231              | 11,204                 | 46         |
| World Missions   | 256,326          | 10,861             | 136,442                | 53         |
| Personal Support | 328,311          | 22,181             | 232,796                | 71         |
| TOTALS           | \$1,739,469      | \$134,211          | \$1,195,810            | 69         |
| TOTALS 2003      | \$1,740,325      | \$115,719          | \$1,024,811            | <b>59</b>  |
| Goal 67%         |                  |                    |                        |            |

The Evangelism Department received \$5,730 in August. The office of director of Development received \$25 in August.

#### [Editorial]

# Start with Missions

n the book, "Each for the Other, All for Christ," reviewed on pages 12-13, the story is told of a telegram received by one of the founders of the Lutheran Free Church movement, Georg Sverdrup. The telegram shared news from the General Assembly of the Norwegian Mission Society of 1892. The southwest corner of the



**Craig Johnson** 

country of Madagascar had been granted to the Norwegian-Americans as a mission field in which they could work. Sverdrup valued the telegram and described it as a "treasure of great worth."

Some would see a telegram like the one Sverdrup received as a burden to bear and one more thing that had to be done. To Sverdrup, however, the telegram represented a privilege and a gracious invitation from God to be involved in His work.

The treasured telegram was received five years before the Lutheran Free Church was officially organized. It is an indication of the great interest the founders of our movement had in missions. The book states, "Sverdrup believed a visible sign of spiritual life in a congregation was its concern for reaching the lost around the world. ... Mission work, above all other enterprises, was an indication that God's Spirit was active in a congregation."

Mission work was something that was quickly entered into in the early days of the AFLC as well. Our organizing conference was in October 1962. Soon after that, at

the 1964 Annual Conference, two missionary families were commissioned to be sent to Brazil: the John Abel and the Alvin Grothe families.

The founders of the LFC and the founders of the AFLC did not wait until the groups were totally organized, budgets were all in place and the base was built up before entering into mission work around the world. They knew the world was full of lost people. The call had been given to "go." And so they went with the good news of Jesus.

Our predecessors must have been tempted to think they ought to keep all their resources and people home to help get the new church body off the ground. It would have been understandable if they had said, "Mission work will come later when we grow a little more and have things more together."

If we wait until the time is right to send missionaries, they'll never be sent. The base will never be big enough. Needs will always exist here at home. But still we send missionaries. We don't wait for the convenient time. We wait upon the Lord and follow His leading without delay.

Our AFLC has been in existence now for more than 40 years. We have grown to some 260 congregations in the United States. And yet at times the temptation comes to doubt if we have the resources to send more missionaries. May the example of our founders inspire us. Let us walk by faith as they did. If God could equip them, in those early days when they had far smaller numbers than we have now, to send out missionaries, He can most certainly equip us to raise up, send out and support more missionaries than we

They knew the world was full of lost people. The call had been given to "go." And so they went with the good news of Jesus.

are supporting today.

Part of the reason our founders sent out missionaries right away is seen in the attitude Sverdrup had toward the telegram. He saw it as a treasure. It gave him joy to be part of God's work of spreading the good news around the world. He saw that the correct motivation for missions is not guilt or pity for the people but the love of Christ.

Sometimes when we think of missions we think of the sacrifice, we think of the burdens, but we forget the joy. In the account of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, in the midst of persecution and trials, the Bible says, "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. ... they continued to preach the good news" (Acts 13:52,

It is good news that we preach. It is a privilege that we have been given. It is a joy to be able to go to the entire world with the life-changing message of Christ.

#### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### [ARC]

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

— Hebrews 12:2

## **Distractions**

ix our eyes on Jesus with all the distractions in our crazy lives? Is that possible? Three kids need to be picked up at the same time from different locations, the house is a mess and dinner guests are on the way, the budget for next year was due last week, the cat is in the tree and you're late for a business meeting, the car is overheating while the other has a flat, and you promised to help the neighbor lady with her shopping.

I'm sure your list might look something like mine with some variation, but you get the idea. It's very difficult to fix our eyes on Jesus when there are so many distractions in our lives. It might be nice to say, "Just drop all your responsibilities and take the whole day to read and meditate." You know as well as I do that's not going to happen. What we need to do is to learn to focus on Jesus in the midst of our busy schedules.

There's a children's sermon I share that helps get this point across. I tell the kids up front that I will show them a sentence for a very brief moment. Their goal is to read the message. As I count, "One, two, three," someone in the back of the church pops a balloon. Of course the kids are surprised and distracted. They turn around and miss the message. I give them the same instruc-

tions and follow the same format, once again popping a balloon right at the moment the message is revealed. The second time a few of the children do not turn with the loud popping. Those few are able to read the message. The third time I go through the instructions, again counting to three. But this time when the balloon pops almost all of the children tune out the distraction. They are able to read the message, "Fix your eyes on Jesus."

Why were the children able to focus enough to read the message? The answer is obvious. They were expecting the distraction. This simple reminder applies to each of us as well. We shouldn't be surprised when each day brings us the unexpected. We can't control the number of crazy things that happen to us each day, but we can be aware that they will happen. This knowledge helps us maintain our focus on Jesus. He's the one who ultimately is our guide and strength for each day.

I've got to run. I just got an emergency call from a business in town. They need lunch for 65 people. Thank you Jesus for being my example and getting me through each day.

— Eric Westlake ARC director