


THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2006

AMBASSADOR



WHETHER IT'S
DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL,
COMPULSIVE
BEHAVIORS LIKE
EATING DISORDERS
OR AN INABILITY
TO LIVE WITHOUT
YOUR TELEVISION,
CHRIST OFFERS
FREEDOM TO
HIS CHILDREN

addiction
addiction
addiction
addiction



goldenharvest

BY FAYLIN MYHRE

The days have steadily marched on and the signs of fall are unmistakable. The leaves have changed color and school supplies fill store shelves, yellow school buses rumble past and leaves, pumpkins and scarecrows pop up in the home décor and craft aisle. The nights are cool, but we need one last campout, one more fishing trip, one last swim in the lake. The farmer has begun his harvest. The field of golden grain I meant to photograph has been harvested and plowed under. The cheery yellow sunflower field is now filled with drooping heads heavy with their seed. Soon the beans, corn, beets, and the rest will be ready for harvest as well. My lovely red apples lay mostly on the ground ready for the kettle

while the plums, tomatoes and other produce are calling to be eaten or canned.

Our labors — tilling, planting, weeding, fertilizing, praying, hoping, blood, sweat and tears — have been poured into our hope for a crop to harvest. We anxiously wait for perfect conditions so that we can bring in the best possible crop. When that time comes, we get out to the fields without delay and do our very best to bring in that harvest. We don't sit waiting for the grain to jump into the hopper on the combine or the corn to pick itself. My apples won't become tasty apple sauce or jelly and my tomatoes don't become salsa because I wish it were so. I need to finish what I've started and follow through to the end.

In John 4:34-38 Jesus tells us that the fields are white unto harvest. One plants the seed of truth, while another waters that seed with tears. Others help the seed grow as they share the warmth and sunlight of Christ-like love. One sows and another reaps. In I Corinthians 3:6 Paul tells us that God gives the increase. There are souls waiting to be brought into God's family. The Father is wait-

ing for us to get about His business!

Lanny Wolfe has written a gospel song titled, "My House is Full, But My Field is Empty." It convicts me every time I hear it. After all, I feast on the Word, fellowship with other believers and have many blessings as a child of the King. The Father is calling you and me to work in His fields, writes Wolfe, to "push away from the table, look out through the window pane," for "just beyond the house of plenty lies a field of golden grain."

People's lives are ripe for harvest, a harvest Jesus has poured His very life blood into preparing. Do you see the neighbor across the street, the person in the office next to yours, the child in your class and the multitude of lost souls on every street, in every mall and every foreign land? Will you join me in answering the Father's call to work in His field for a harvest that will last for all eternity? Don't be content to just sit around His table!

Myhre is a member of Bethany Free Lutheran, Wahpeton, N.D.

October 2006 >> THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol.44, no. 10

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@afllc.org

Editorial Board 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., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@afllc.org.

Subscription rates:
\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S.
\$18 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$20 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., Plymouth, MN 55441.

soundbites <<

Brokenness — a broken heart, a broken spirit — molds our character closer to the character of God than anything else. To experience defeat, disappointment, loss — the raw ingredients of brokenness — moves us closer to being like God than victory and gain and fulfillment ever can.

— Mark Buchanan
“Your God is Too Safe”

In Him (Christ) He promises and assures us of the two facts: “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” and, “Arise and walk!” This renewal applies to the whole man and reaches to all the spheres of life; to body, soul and spirit; to understanding, emotion, will and deed.

— Adolf Koberle
“The Quest for Holiness”

I began to envision God less as a stern judge shaking his finger at my waywardness than as a doctor who prescribes behavior in my best interest in order to safeguard my health.

— Philip Yancey

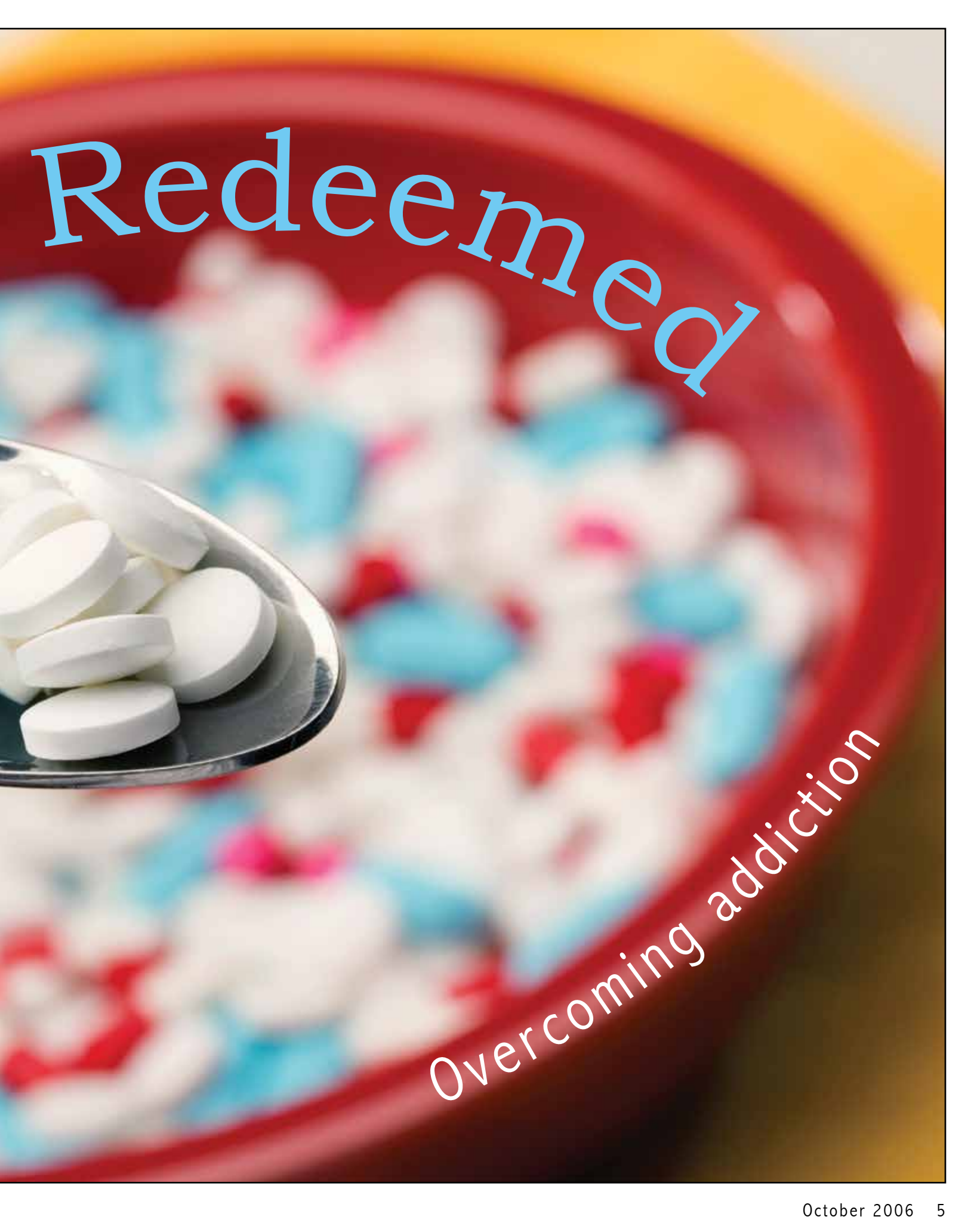
There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.

— Blaise Pascal

To listen to Rick and Dawn Williams share their extraordinary musical talents on Sunday mornings — she with her beautiful soprano voice and he with his electric guitar — no one would know of their battles with the demons of addiction. For years Rick struggled with drug abuse and Dawn with alcohol. But, because of Jesus, their wasted years have been restored.

BY CHERI RUSSUM

Lives



Redeemed

Overcoming addiction



“And I will restore to you the years

From Homelessness to Hope: Rick's Story

Rick began using drugs when he was 12 years old, shortly after his mother died from ovarian cancer. In one of his last phone conversations with his mother from her hospital room, Rick recalls her saying, “Of all the kids, I worry about you the most.” Her words seemed almost prophetic. Shortly after her death, Rick began sniffing glue and drinking wine to dull his emotional pain.

Rick's father was a nuclear engineer and later remarried. He moved the family from Walnut Creek, Calif., to Kennewick, Wash. It was the '60s and Rick found artificial solace in the hippy counter-culture movement. Like a thirst never satisfied, drug use multiplied throughout his high school years — prescription narcotics, marijuana, LSD and eventually heroin. Rick hung out with other addicts, went to concerts and played guitar, all the while becoming more alienated from his family.

The hippie culture grew more decadent, and Rick became very disillusioned with the lifestyle. He recalls one night lying awake in a Seattle homeless shelter with other addicts sleeping on rows of mattresses when an elderly man next to him started convulsing with withdrawal symptoms. To Rick's horror, the man jerked on top of him, pinning Rick to the mattress as his arms and legs flailed uncontrollably. The experience was terrifying, but the next day, Rick went out looking for the next score.

Heroin ate up the years. Two decades had passed when Rick found himself with absolutely nothing and living on the streets. He had been to several rehab facilities and

behavioral modification treatment programs. Nothing worked. He was checking out of a government-run rehab center for the tenth time when he called his dad to try to get some money. (His drug habit was beckoning him for another fix.) When his step-mother answered the phone, she told him they wouldn't give him any more money. She also told Rick that his dad was in open-heart surgery at that time, and that much of his health problems were because of all the worry that Rick had caused. Rick was devastated — he hadn't realized the toll it was taking on his family. It was time to change.

He went to Narcotics Anonymous and began the long road to recovery — one day at a time. In realizing that he was powerless to quit his drug use and change his lifestyle, Rick turned to Jesus for healing and victory. He met his wife, Dawn, and became very involved in a church.

Dawn encouraged Rick to explore his musical talents. He started writing gutsy blues music and lyrics about his life with Jesus and his battles with the devil. His gravelly voice and rhythmic blues guitar combined for a musical treasure that comes from the heart — a life truly surrendered and one gripping onto God's grace.

From Loneliness to Life Fulfilled: Dawn's Story

Dawn grew up in a typical middle-class, hard-working family. She attended church and Sunday school. But, during her high school years, like so many teen girls, Dawn's self-worth plummeted. She found herself finding comfort and acceptance with the party crowd. What started off as



that the locust hath eaten.” Joel 2:25

occasional weekend drinking with friends turned into a craving for alcohol and drugs. Dawn eventually landed in the throes of addiction.

The drinking and drugging life leads to many other things, including for Dawn, a pregnancy. She married her baby's father, and after two years, found herself divorced and alone. The drinking and drugging continued until there was a threat that her little girl would be taken away from her. She loved her daughter, Sarah, but knew that she wasn't the mother that Sarah needed. Dawn was desperate; something had to be done. Her father paid for treatment at a rehab facility where she became clean and sober.

Through the ongoing 12-step process of Alcoholics Anonymous, Dawn found a “higher power” in Jesus Christ. She began attending church again, and through the recovery community met Rick, and they were married.

Life Restored

In her early years of recovery, Dawn was admitted to college and eventually earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and addiction studies, then earned her master's degree in psychology. She now is the drug treatment court supervisor for Snohomish County Superior Court. In her free time, she shares her musical talent with battered women at the local women's shelter and outreach ministry to the homeless.

Rick works as a boilermaker and has started a Christian band called *Rebel Soul*. During performances, Rick shares his hard-hitting life testimony between songs.

The raw miracle of God's grace in his life draws listeners to respond.

Rebel Soul performs all original music, and the band members have donated their talents to social causes. Most recently, *Rebel Soul* performed for about 4,000 people who came to a back-to-school supplies and health fair for needy families. The band also performed a benefit concert to raise funds for a new youth center at their church.

Rick and Dawn now live with a menagerie of pets in a beautiful home on five acres in Lake Stevens, Wash. Along with Dawn's daughter, Sarah, Rick and Dawn attend Elim Free Lutheran Church and share their authentic lives and musical talents during morning worship.

When asked about their recovery from addiction, they both say that it's a day-by-day process — recovery never stops, the temptation is always lurking. They both agree that the keys to living a drug- and alcohol-free life are to cling to Jesus, read His Word, pray and depend on Him to satisfy the longing of one's heart. In addition, they both continue in the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs to keep from relapsing. As Rick says, “The monkey might be off your back, but the circus hasn't left town.”

Russum is a member of Elim Lutheran Church, Lake Stevens, Wash.

is this an

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON



addiction?

Sarah was known as a flirt in school, she was going through boyfriends on a regular basis. She was longing for attention, and she dressed the part. She seemed to be addicted to relationships, but there was more to it than that. Sarah was consumed by what she looked like. It affected what — or whether — she ate. Yet the problem went deeper. At home her parents were always busy with their own things, and if they were together they fought. Inside Sarah was feeling empty, unlovable and lonely, so she did whatever it took to fill that void.

Dan looked like he had it all together. He was smart but didn't brag about it. He was strong and athletic but didn't play games with the girls. He was respected by both students and the teachers, but inside something was really wrong. Dan was dealing with a hidden addiction. His addiction was controlling him, and the life that he was living wasn't really his own. He was addicted to pleasing people, and he was good at it. He had lived to please his parents, his teachers and his classmates, but inside he didn't know who he was. The expectations of others were controlling him.

When the word addiction is used, most of us picture influences from the outside such as drugs, alcohol or pornography. Each of these influences temporarily feed an insatiable inner craving that is never fully satisfied. For instance, hunger is a natural craving that reminds our bodies that it is time to eat. But when food is used to satisfy an emotional emptiness, it, too, can become addictive.

But not all temptations are visible. There are inner, hidden addictions that can have an equally strong and destructive effect on lives. The longing for affirmation can cause Dan to try and please everyone else. In return, Dan is left unsure of who he really is and afraid to try new things because he may fail and lose the respect of those around him. Loneliness can cause Sarah to fill her emptiness with temporary relationships. Her longing for acceptance multiplies the problem, causing her to be obsessed with her appearance and lose logical control over her diet.

The danger with these inner addictions is that they can be hidden and not dealt with for years. They can affect people's relationships with others, their marriages, children, who they will become and even their trust in the Lord. These mental influences can control a person and cause them to become trapped. They lure a person in by meeting some need for a short time, but the need quickly returns and the endless cycle begins.

It is easy for people without a certain vice or crav-

ing to offer an easy solution since they personally do not battle addiction's daily control over their lives. Yet for the Christian it is possible to overcome any temptation that is common to man. It is possible because the strength to change does not come from ourselves or our self-will, but from Christ alone who conquered every temptation and who alone has power over death.

The Apostle Paul struggled with temptations and addictions. He describes his battle with his cravings in Romans 6 and 7. At the end of chapter 7, Paul cries out with the same agony of any man and says, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Then, as if with a pregnant pause, a deep breath and increased volume he adds, "Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is the power of God that changes a believer from the inside out. It is the Lord's promise that says, "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation," (II Thessalonians 5:17) it is His Holy Spirit that "intercedes for us in our weakness" (Romans 8:26), and it is Jesus himself who, "while we were yet sinners, ... died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The road to recovery is not an easy one, regardless of the type of addiction. However, it can be conquered, ultimately, with God's help. Ultimate victory gives addicts freedom like a prisoner let loose from his chains. As a practical step, read Romans 6, 7 and 8 for the times when the battle is the strongest. Put all three chapters to memory to help you face struggles that continue their grasp. Neither God, nor His Word, will desert you in your most dire time of need.

For Dan the recovery began when he recognized that because of Christ alone, he was pleasing in God's sight. There was nothing that he could do to become more or less pleasing in the Lord's eyes. When Dan found peace in his relationship with the Lord, then what people thought didn't seem to matter as much. There was only one person that he wanted to please, and that same One made him pleasing.

Sarah needed the promise that Jesus loved her and that He would never leave her. She found peace in knowing she was accepted just as she was. Regardless of her past and her appearance, she was loved. Her new life in Christ also made her beautiful because Christ's character was shining out from her life and everyone could see her new "hidden addiction."

Olson, a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn., is the director of Youth Ministries for the AFLC.



— Working through sexual sin —

BY PASTOR JERRY NELSON

Frank is a respected member in his community. He is the president of his local congregation, attends Saturday morning men's prayer breakfast, and is on the board of several ministries. He has been married to Cindy for 15 years, and together they have two daughters, ages 13 and 10. Frank and Cindy met in their junior year while attending a Christian college and married as soon as they graduated. Frank is in the insurance business and works out of their home. He puts in long hours, often until the early morning hours. Recently, Cindy woke up at 1 a.m. and realized Frank hadn't yet come to bed. She found him in his office with his back turned toward her. On the computer screen she saw pornography. She was devastated.

Over the following weeks Frank revealed to Cindy that he had a problem with pornography going back to when he was a young teenager. Often, Frank and a friend took his friend's father's Playboy to their fort to look at all the pictures. Over the years he indulged more and more, even though he hated himself for doing it. He would attend summer Bible camps and retreats and commit himself to stopping his developing habit. And it would work for a while, but soon he would be back at it, even though he prayed as hard as he could. When he met Cindy, he thought marriage would be the answer to his problem and it did help — for a while.

Sexual sin is the result of yielding to the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Addictions are a pattern of out-of-control usage for a year or more, with increasing use over time. The increase may have periods of absence, alternating with periods of elevation, as in Frank's case. The addiction becomes the central organizing activity of life around which everything else revolves. Mood swings are

often associated with the behavior, along with the presence of depression. There may be other symptoms, such as poor impulse control, a consistent need to be liked and approved, and a core belief that sex is equal to love.

There is a pattern to sexual bondage which includes preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive sexual behavior and despair. Most addictions occur as a way of dealing with some kind of emotional pain. Preoccupation through sexual fantasy is

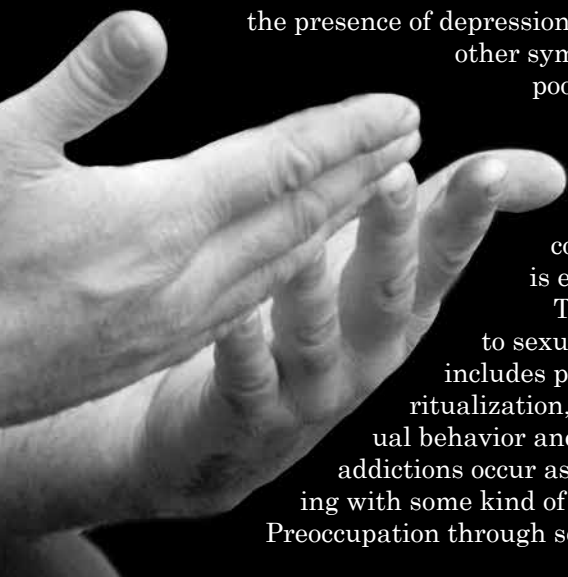
a means of coping with perceived unmet needs or emotional pain. The person then develops rituals, or patterns of behavior that lead to gratification. They then act out on their addiction, which in Frank's case meant viewing internet pornography. Even though the addiction is meant to relieve some kind of pain, it is a lie. The act fails to bring relief, leading to helplessness and hopelessness. And the cycle of sin-confess-sin-confess starts over again.

Like Frank, the addict has many failed efforts to control his or her behavior. The addiction overtakes and overwhelms the person who is not able to help themselves without intervention from God and others. The Apostle Paul understood this principle when he wrote, "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the my members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:21-25, NIV).

In Romans 6, Paul speaks specifically about the effects of sin and the body. "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6:11-13).

The first overriding principle in recovery is realizing and confessing that the addict cannot overcome this sin on his/her own. It is only through the power of our risen Lord that we can count ourselves dead to sin. Accountability and honesty are also major principles in recovery from addictive habits. Because of our sin nature there will be times of weakness, which addicts need to be prepared for. The addict knows what his/her particular instrument of wickedness is and when tempted needs to call upon their accountability partners for prayer, help and support. The addict also needs to work through the emotional and spiritual pain — which often serve as triggers to acting out patterns — with a competent counselor or pastor who understands the nature of the harm done, can help the person find meaning in the suffering of the experience, and help in the process of forgiveness with everyone involved.

Pastor Jerry Nelson is a licensed marriage and family therapist with a private practice in La Crosse, Wis. He also serves as a pastoral counselor at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran Church, Onalaska, Wis.





The Church
has a role
in addiction
recovery

freedom at

Dennis is from a Christian family of 15 siblings. Five of his brothers have passed away, three of them as a direct consequence of alcoholism. That was one of the reasons that drew him to help those who are in bondage to addiction.

Addiction, whether it's drugs, alcohol, food or compulsive behavior, is a struggle people battle on many levels. Its consequences are worse than AIDS and leprosy. Why? Because the addict, though alive, brings nothing but death and pain to his or her community. Families and friends often lose hope of seeing an addict return to sanity.

Addicts used to consider their addictions as a personalized evil with a cunning, baffling and powerful character. But health care professionals define addiction as a progressive, chronic and fatal disease. Addiction is a holistic disease with multiple causes and requiring multiple treatment approaches. Genetics, physiology, relationships, psychology, spirituality and other factors are involved in making a person an addict. Effective treatment has to address those multiple factors.

The goal of any treatment program is twofold: stopping the use of the addictive chemical(s)/compulsive behavior(s) and changing the lifestyle of the person. So what role — if any — does the local congregation play in addiction recovery? Look at Jesus' example.

Jesus summarizes His ministry and purpose in these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

last



BY DR. DANIEL RAKOTOJOELINANDRASANA

Jesus still heals and sets people free today. The name Jesus, or *Yeshua* in Aramaic, means savior. In Greek, “to save” and “to heal” are one in the same verb, *sozo*. Jesus is the Savior and the Healer. Setting people free from addiction is an essential implementation of Jesus’ gospel of peace, liberation and freedom. The Church, the body of Christ to which your congregation belongs, is a powerful agency of healing and liberation. The work of the Holy Spirit, teaching truth from the Word of God, and experiencing love and fellowship are the most powerful means of transformation and healing.

Members of Vision of Glory Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Minn., believe that the church in the name of Jesus is the best agency to help addicts change and recover. In 2005, the church council decided to start the Jesus Sets Free (JSF) addiction ministry after they came to the conviction that, much like Jesus’ ministry on Earth, the church should be involved in healing ministry.

While JSF does not replace regular treatment programs, our ministry does use tools commonly found in other programs, such as cognitive methods, support groups, mentoring and a Christian version of the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. The ultimate goal of JSF is to help recovering addicts become disciples of Jesus. Participants meet on Monday evenings for worship, fellowship, teaching, testimonies, small groups and mentoring. On Friday nights we have Bible studies.

Since the ministry began, Jesus has brought healing and freedom to drug addicts, alcoholics and those oppressed by compulsive behaviors.

Consider Peter, a young man in his 40s, who saw a brochure on JSF while in prison because of drug-related crimes. Since his release, he has been able to attend JSF on Monday nights and church on Sundays. He has new

strength and motivation to stay sober and to restart a new life.

Ken and Robin are recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. They want to stay sober, but at the same time they want to be true followers of Jesus. For them, going to the Bible study on Friday nights has given them hope.

Juanita is an African-American woman in her 40s with children and grandchildren. She was released from jail and joined JSF. She said she came because she wants to stay free and to walk with Jesus.

We believe the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, is powerful to induce a transformation in people with addiction and help them stop using. The Bible and cognitive methods help addicts understand the liberating truth of the gospel. Jesus is the truth that sets people free from sin, the power of death and the devil (John 8:32,36; 14:6).

A ministry to alcoholics and drug addicts is hard and challenging. Participants come with their multiple problems, and some leave, never to be seen again. We thank God that despite the difficulties we encounter on the way, a steady group of recovering addicts have been able to find Jesus through JSF and grow as disciples and free people.

Dr. Daniel Rakotojoelinandrasana, the director of Jesus Sets Free healing ministry and addiction program at Vision of Glory Lutheran Church, Plymouth Minn., was trained as a counselor in chemical dependency at Hazelden, practiced medicine in Madagascar and achieved a D. Min from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.



BY DR. LINDA MINTLE

work addict

If you work to avoid negative emotional states such as anxiety and depression, perhaps work has taken on an addictive quality.

In a state of frustration, Rachel recounted her life. "It's like I married my alcoholic father. Not a day goes by in which my husband spends less than 12 hours on some assignment related to work. When we vacation, he says he wants to rest but I always find him secretly working on his lap top. At night, he steals away to the quiet of his at-home office until the wee hours of the morning. After a few hours of sleep, he's up and traveling to the real office job. I don't see him until 8 p.m. By then the kids are in bed. He grabs a bite to eat and the cycle starts all over again. There is something terribly wrong here. Can a person be addicted to work?"

In the same way a drug addict uses pot or an alcoholic downs booze, work can have an anesthetizing effect on negative emotions. Yes, people do use work to escape and avoid unpleasant emotional states. But because hard work is so sanctioned in our society, it is an addiction often minimized. But the fallout for the family can be just as devastating.

Our once sacred days of rest have vanished as malls and superstores stay open [on] Sundays. Technology invades our home life. Solicitors assault us during the dinner hour. And the boundary between work and home is blurred by pagers, faxes, cell phones and computers. This instant communiqué turns our play to work and our home fronts to alternate work sites.

Workaholism is real. But how do you know if you are simply a hard worker or a workaholic? Ask yourself these questions:

Do you view work as a haven rather than a necessity or obligation?

Does work obliterate all other areas of your life?

Can you make the transition from the office to the Little League game without guilt and constantly thinking of what you need to do?

Do you have work scattered all over your home?

Do you regularly break commitments to family and friends because of deadlines and work commit-

ments?

Do you get an adrenaline rush from meeting impossible deadlines?

Are you preoccupied with work no matter what you do?

Do you work long after your co-workers are finished?

If your answers are "Yes" to most of these questions, it's time to reevaluate your love for work and cut back. Workaholism can bring emotional estrangement and withdrawal in your relationships. In the worst case, it can even lead to separation and divorce.

Children of workaholics learn they are valued for their achievements and often lack parent attention. They have high levels of depression and tend to take on parenting roles similar to those in alcoholic homes.

If you think you may be a workaholic, acknowledge the problem. Then, begin making small changes that limit work hours. Pay attention to other parts of life like your family, spirituality, play, friends, etc. Vow to spend more time doing other things and do them. Talk to your family about balance and determine ways to be more involved. Turn off electronics when you come home and be unavailable for certain hours of the day. Leave the office at a reasonable time, even if your work isn't perfect or completely finished.

Don't downplay the negative effects workaholism [has on] your life. Even though you may be rewarded at the work place for your obsessive efforts, your family needs you, not more work. And as the well-known saying goes, "I've never met a dying person who regretted not spending more time at the office!"

Dr. Mintle, a licensed clinical and social worker who has had a general clinical practice for the last 20 years, specializes in marriage and family therapy as well as eating disorders. Her article, "The Addiction of Work," appeared in her online column, "Dr. Linda Helps," and can be found at www.dr-linda-helps.com.



BY PASTOR CRAIG SCAVO

Have you ever walked into the kitchen late in the evening and seen that last piece of chocolate layer cake sitting on the counter? You could almost hear it calling your name. You thought to yourself, “Self, I’m kind of hungry. And, boy, that piece of cake would sure taste good.” But you know you have that medical test in the morning, and you need to fast for 12 hours. So the thoughts start to fly through your mind — you know the ones I’m talking about. “No one would know if I eat that piece of cake. It was saved for me to begin with! It can’t possibly mess up my tests that bad; it’s just a small piece. Besides, there’s nothing really the matter with me to begin with! And let’s not forget that I’m an adult — I can do what ever I want to do!”

Maybe you haven’t been in this exact situation, but just plug in whatever temptation or worldly passion that happens to be your weakness, and you know the feelings and thoughts I’m talking about.

So, what do we do about these thoughts and temptations? Do we give in? Do they really matter? Is eating a piece of cake really so damaging to our faith? After all, aren’t we free from the law and its condemnation?

Paul gives us some insights into how we are to live our lives in his letter to Titus (2:11-14). In this section of the letter, Paul tells us that we can live upright and godly lives with self-control, denying the “worldly passions” and “ungodliness” that is around us daily. Paul writes:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

The first insight we get from Paul is that God’s grace teaches us to say “No” to the things of the world. But what about the law? Doesn’t that teach us to say “No”? Absolutely! The law commands us to say “No” and gives

us dire consequences if we don’t obey. But it is the grace of God, that undeserved love found in the person of Jesus Christ, that teaches us to say “No” by actually changing us. It is God’s grace that moves us to say “No” to the world from our hearts.

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17 that we are new creations in Christ. The law only tells us what is right and wrong, but it is God’s grace that actually gives us the reason to do what is right as well as the strength to accomplish it and the will to do what is pleasing to God.

And not only does this undeserved love teach us to say “No,” it also teaches us to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life. When we keep in mind that we are the recipients of such an undeserved gift, we are motivated to live a life that is pleasing to God and to serve Him according to His will.

Speaking from personal experience, I cannot live a life of self-control merely through self-effort. I always fail, no matter how hard I try. It is only through God’s grace that I can achieve self-control.

We can live self-controlled, upright, godly lives today because we look ahead to our “blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” This expectation of Jesus’ coming again in glory moves us to live our lives as we do. Paul goes on to remind us of what Jesus did for us; He gave Himself for us to save us from all sin, and to “purify” us for Himself. We are His!

That is how we can live our lives in an upright and godly way with self-control. Because we belong to Him we are eager to do what is right and good. We have been purified by Jesus’ cleansing blood, so now we strive to become more pure in our own actions. It is the gospel that moves us to do what the law demands. Praise God from whom all good things flow!

Scavo serves Faith Lutheran Church, Durant, Okla.

The gospel moves
us to do what
the law demands

self-control



North Dakota congregation celebrates 25th anniversary



Members of Our Savior's Lutheran, Stanley, N.D., celebrated the congregation's 25th anniversary on July 16 with a special service and events. Pictured above are current and former members of the Sunday school singing during special music. At right are Pastor Rodney Johnson and charter member Oral Ranum, who was the congregation's first contact with the AFLC to organize a new church.



Church builder Gary Engel (right) presents a Maasai tribal elder scepter to his father, Ed Engel, (left) while his mother, Eva, enjoys the presentation. Gary, a former member of Zion Lutheran Church, Silverhill, Ala., spent a month in Tanzania this summer on a church-building mission trip. The scepter was presented to him by a Maasai tribal elder, who asked him to give the gift to a church elder in remembrance of the Tanzanian church. The scepter was given to Zion Lutheran Church museum, where it is currently on display.



Pastor Michael Peterson, center, was installed June 4 at Egeland Free Lutheran, Webster, S.D. Also pictured are Marie Peterson and Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president, who presided over the installation.

Pastor Mark Richardson, who serves Calvary Lutheran Church, Wallace, S.D., was installed Sept. 10 by AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee.

The new dean of AFLBS, **Pastor Joel Rolf**, was installed Sept. 4 by AFLC President Robert Lee during the opening service of the school year. The message was brought by Pastor Phil Haugen. Board of Trustees members Larry Behne, Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Pastor Terry Olson, Brent Peterson, James Rolf, and Pastor Jon Wellumson also participated.



Pastor Terry Culler, right, and Bernice Rinehart, president of St. Paul's church council, stand next to the cornerstone of the sanctuary, which was laid on Aug. 6, 1826.

Maryland congregation celebrates 180 years

Members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Leitersburg, Md., celebrated the congregation's 180th anniversary on Aug. 6 with a special service commemorating its many years of ministry and service to the people of the community.

The liturgy used for the service was an order of worship from the mid-19th century. Scripture readings were those used at the laying of the cornerstone of the sanctuary in 1826. Pastor Terry Culler brought a message from Ephesians 2:19-21, the same Scripture used by Pastor Frederick Ruthrauff in 1826.

Among the visitors for the service were Pastor David Schrader, pastor emeritus, and the Ambassadors summer team from AFLBS, who presented a concert on Aug. 5. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee sent greetings, encouraging the congregation to renew its commitment to the evangelical Lutheran heritage that inspired and nourished it. St. Paul's joined the AFLC in December 2005.

Home Missions invites you to visit southern congregations

If you are heading south this winter, AFLC Home Missions invites you to stop by and visit our newer congregations: Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif., served by Pastor Jim Johnson; Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., served by Pastor Al Monson; Cornerstone Community Church, Brandon, Fla., served by Pastor Brian Pearson; Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Humboldt, Tenn., which is searching for a pastor; and Faith Lutheran Church, Durant, Okla., served by Pastor Craig Scavo.

These congregations would be greatly encouraged through your visit. For more information, contact the Home Missions office at (763) 545-5631 or email homemis@afc.org.

Pastor Jim Christianson has accepted a call to serve the two-point parish of Badger Creek Free Lutheran, Badger, Minn., and Oiland Lutheran, Greenbush, Minn. Christian most recently served the two-point parish at Bethany Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., and United Lutheran in McLeod, N.D.

Pastor Les Galland, Shakopee, Minn., has accepted a part-time call to serve King of Glory Lutheran, Eden Prairie, Minn., where he was installed Sept. 17 by AFLC Vice President Pastor Elden Nelson.

Andrew Peterson, a 2006 graduate of AFLBS, has accepted a call to serve as youth ministry director at First Lutheran in Oklahoma City, his home congregation.

Pastor Michael Brandt, who serves Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., was a special guest Aug. 31 on a broadcast of Focus on the Family. The program was titled, "Honoring Pastors."

Pastor Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel were commissioned by East European Missions Network on Sept. 22 at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. The Chmiels are preparing for ministry in the Ukraine. They were commissioned by the AFLC in June at the Annual Conference.

Paul Blom, a 2001 graduate of AFLBS and a 2002 graduate of MTI, left for Martin, Slovakia, where he will serve a one- to two-year mission term with EEMN as an English teacher at a Lutheran elementary school.

Pastor Del Palmer, AFLC World Missions director, left for a week-long trip to Uganda on Sept. 27 to make final preparations for the deployment of **Nate and Rhoda Jore**, who will begin a new mission work in Uganda. Palmer will finalize a working agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Uganda, with which the Jores will be partnering in work. The Jores will leave for Uganda on Nov. 1 and will spend their first year learning the language and culture before beginning their work to train pastoral leaders. They will be commissioned on Oct. 29 at Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

Pastor Kevin Olson will continue to work as director of Youth Ministries through the end of July 2007. Beginning in August 2007, he will begin a new distance education ministry through AFLC World Missions.

Myrtle Smith, 82, of Osceola, Wis., died Aug. 14. Myrtle was the wife of Pastor Gene Barnum Smith, who served as chaplain of the Association Retreat Center, Osceola. The service was Aug. 18 at Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis., with Pastor David Johnson officiating.

Hope Free Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes, Minn., a Home Missions congregation, was placed on the membership roster of the AFLC by the Coordinating Committee during their meeting Aug. 7.

Pastor Larry Froemming, Beloit, Wis., was installed Sept. 3 as the part-time pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, Brodhead, Wis.

Pastor James Ritter, who serves Faith Lutheran Church, Shakopee, Minn., was installed Sept. 10 by Home Missions Director Pastor Paul Nash.

missionmotivation

BY PASTOR CRAIG WENTZEL

“Jesus ...was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.”

— Mark 6:34



When I attended California Lutheran Bible School, I learned from a mission film that there was a need for journalism majors on the mission field. At that time I had been looking for the place where God wanted to use me. Since I had an interest in writing, I started out in college with a journalism major intending to join the mission field. But I was primarily concerned with what I should be *doing* — the *method* of missions — and not the *motive* behind the method. Later on in my college years, the Lord re-directed me to enter parish ministry.

I find it interesting that the Lord has brought me back to those early passions by allowing me to serve on the AFLC's World Missions Committee. The work has been very enlightening to me and I have been stretched as I have participated in this committee. I hadn't realized how complex the whole matter of world missions has become. There are so many questions about *how* to do mission work in different countries that it is very easy to become bogged-down with the *method* of missions. However, what is always most important about missions is our starting point, our *motive* for world missions, which is a heart for lost people wherever we find them — the sheep Jesus saw who needed a shepherd. Our ending point, our mark or target, for world missions is the adoption of those people into Jesus' forever family. The *method* of missions is just the way we get from one point to the other.

I give thanks for all of our AFLC missionaries who are each concerned about *people* above all, and not just about the particular work they are doing. May the Lord give each of us His heart for world missions!

Wentzel, who is pastor of Living Word Lutheran Church, Edmore, N.D., serves on the AFLC's World Missions Committee.

The best leaders aren't those who
order, dictate or squeeze out

bully **V** servant

Bad News for Bullies is the name of an essay by David Gergen in a recent issue (June 19) of "U.S. News & World Report." He tells of a university study reporting that four out of five employees have worked for a tyrant at one time or another. Other surveys found that of all the complaints people have about their jobs, from the size of their paycheck to the length of their working days, the biggest one is the bully boss.

The church is no stranger to bully bosses. I think of the radio preacher who, announcing that his congregation did not change pastors but only changed people, declared that the church doors swung both ways, "so if you don't like my preaching, get out!" Another comes to mind who said that when he tells members of his congregation to jump, the only response should be: "How high?" Then there was the layman who wanted to be chairman of his congregation because he liked telling people what to do. "It's my way or the highway" is a sad leadership slogan.



Pastor Robert Lee

The term *bully pulpit* probably refers to Theodore Roosevelt's description of the presidency, but in his day the word "bully" meant "fine" or "excellent," rather than browbeating other people to agree with us. Unfortunately, there are pastors who abuse their preaching ministries by thinly veiled sermonic attacks against those who dare to disagree with them on any issue, thus creating bully pulpits in the most literal sense

of the phrase. What a tragedy when the Word of God is misused to intimidate instead of to inspire.

Pastors may be bullied, too. A congregation that had problems with a previous pastor found it difficult to trust the new shepherd, and the lay leaders would summarily dismiss any of his suggestions with the comment, "We have learned that pastors can be wrong, too." A church treasurer holds the pastor's paycheck each month until he asks for it. Deacons and trustees may pervert the biblical concept of the pastor as servant to simply mean that they tell him what to do.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

The concept of servant leadership should not be a new one to Christians, for it is exactly what Jesus taught. Today the bully may finally have seen his end, writes Gergen, for increasingly the best leaders are those who don't order but persuade; don't dictate but draw out; don't squeeze but grow the people around them. "They push power out of the front office, down into the organization, and become a leader of leaders." He writes about successful CEOs and corporations, but one might be hopeful that this genuinely scriptural design is gaining ground in religious circles as well.

Pity the bullies, whether they are hiding in pulpits or pews, and pray for them. Our gracious God still transforms lives and reforms character. He is not finished yet with the bully among us ... and within us.



Dalton Parish uses Thrivent grant to reach kids with VBS

Submitted by Lead Pastor Steve Carlson,
Associate Pastor Mark Johnson, and VBS
Director Laurie Jensen



The Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, a three-point parish in west-central Minnesota, received a Thrivent Grant to help further community evangelistic outreach through a vacation Bible school program. More than 150 students (pre-

school through twelfth grade) participated in VBS during the week of July 30-Aug. 4. The grant money allowed us to give each family a DVD titled, "The Story of Jesus for Children," as we canvassed our area.

Under the theme, "Son Treasure Island—Discovering God's Love," students studied qualities about God's loving character, including God is giving, kind, caring, forgiving, and that God's love is forever.

The grant money was also used to purchase 100 Evangecubes for the older students. The cubes, which depict the salvation story on a unique graphic tool, was a popular item for the students, who used the cubes to present the salvation message to friends.

In addition to the teaching, crafts, puppets, and music, there was also the excitement of taking a mission offering each evening for Nate and Rhoda Jore, missionaries preparing to go to Uganda, Africa, to work with Christian leaders and help in the training of pastors. A friendly race between the boys and girls (and a challenge to the adults to match it during the program) resulted in an offering of more than \$1,200 to support the Jores.

The parish also hosted a baseball/softball clinic each afternoon. Participants had the opportunity to improve their hitting, pitching, and fielding skills. Guest speakers during the week were Chris Wasberg (former Concordia College pitcher), Karl Johnson (former Minnesota Gopher and Twins minor leaguer), and Craig Olson (Lakes Radio broadcaster). More than 60 kids attended this event.

We are grateful to God for a great week in His Word, the clear focus on Jesus our Savior, for the many teachers and helpers, the students and their families, and the community-wide ministry that continues to take place. Our thanks also go to Pastor Jim Rassmusen, the AFLC's director of Evangelism, and Thrivent for the grant which enable us to do some new and extended ministry.

AFLC Memorials: August

AFLBS

Dienne Andrews
Junel Pelke
Clara Nelson
KateLynn Larson

AFLTS

KateLynn Larson

Evangelism

Myrtle Smith

General Fund

Jane Schultz

Home Missions

Elaine Peterson

Bernard Teske

Parish Education

Norman Boyum

Vision

Myrtle Smith

WMF

Leo Vassler

Avis Berlin

Bernice Nilson

Bette Ford

Marie Neushwander

World Missions

Carlton Knutson

Helen Sveen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1- August 31, 2006

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$325,700	\$26,132	\$218,757	67
Youth Ministries	57,949	3,103	43,200	75
Evangelism	98,330	5,779	61,583	63
Parish Education	96,477	12,125	54,673	57
Seminary	189,224	14,539	128,877	68
Bible School	296,257	42,744	223,605	75
Home Missions	293,287	26,100	172,135	59
World Missions	260,933	13,918	155,494	60
Personal Support	376,641	47,118	303,727	81
TOTALS	\$1,944,798	\$191,558	\$1,362,052	68
TOTALS 2005	\$1,860,474	\$154,296	\$1,279,350	69

Goal 67%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

a family affair

When you can't win the victory for the ones you love

Some people have a hard time doing things in moderation. My sister, Dona, was like that. She got started collecting Precious Moments figurines and pretty soon they were all over her house. If she liked a song she would play it over and over again.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Her zeal was often focused in a good direction. She could be moved by the needs of others and be filled with compassion. At times when others were very

“moderate” in their concern for hurting people, she wasn’t.

People like my sister make life interesting. They can bring joy and vibrancy to life. They can be a splash of color on a dull, gray picture. However, they can face certain challenges — namely, addictions.

Over the years Dona had a number of health problems. She often experienced serious pain, and the doctors were quick to prescribe medication. It wasn’t easy for her to take just the amount of pills the doctors told her to take. It was easy to find doctors to write prescriptions. She became addicted, and the whole family became involved in the struggle.

Addictions are usually a family affair. The struggles of one impact the rest. In I Corinthians 11:26 it says regarding the body of Christ, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

We would rejoice when Dona would find help and appear to have turned a corner. We’d suffer when she gave in to temptation. We would wonder what we could do to help.

Guys generally like to fix things. Pastors want to fix broken lives. The one I wanted to fix the most was my sister, but I couldn’t do it. I would say what I thought were the right words. I’d try to do what I thought were the right things. Still she faced the same struggles. It’s frustrating and discouraging when you’re in the business of helping people, and you can’t seem to help the ones you love the most.

It is humbling but necessary for us to admit we can’t win the victory for the ones we love. We can’t protect them from all danger. We can’t overcome all the challenges for them. We have to give up trying to be their savior, and point them to Jesus, the one and only Savior. We have to face up to the truth that “with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

While running the race of life Dona faced challenges, but she ended well. We had a family dinner on her birthday. There was much laughter and love. The mood was good. Dona was only taking the medication she was supposed to take. She was spending much time in prayer and in the Word of God. She would sit outside her home and look to some hills across the way and reflect on Psalm 121:1-2, “I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help

comes from the Lord the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Two days after her birthday Dona had a severe heart attack. After a few hours in the emergency room she was gone.

It isn’t easy when your family wrestles with an addiction problem. You pray a lot. You admit your shortcomings and inabilities. You recognize the enemy is the addiction and not the person who is addicted. You depend on God. You lift up your eyes to the hills

Guys generally like to fix things. Pastors want to fix broken lives. The one I wanted to fix the most was my sister, but I couldn’t do it.

and recognize your help comes from the Lord.

When we’re going through struggles, the view around us can get discouraging. We need to lift up our eyes. We look to the Lord and see that with Him there is hope. By God’s grace we can endure, we can overcome and we can finish well. And it is how you finish that matters most.

association retreat center

danielchallenge

BY PAT FLANDERS

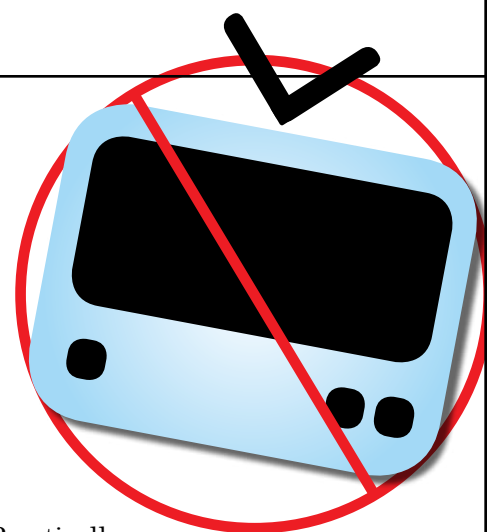
Recently, our family took the “Daniel Challenge.” Referencing Daniel 1:8, we decided that for 10 days we would not defile ourselves with the things of this world. For us, this meant eating healthy foods, taking time for personal and family devotions, and the big one ... turning off the TV and computer. As we progressed along our 10-day journey, we found out how difficult this could be. Sweets and soda are always nearby. The remote control is next to the couch. And where do you find acceptable movies? Through this experience we came to understand how comfortable our lives have become and how easy it is to let our guard down and not pay attention to the subtle trappings of the world.

Every day we witness graphic illustrations of the destructive power of addictiveness in our country. Stories that make the news are drug-related murders, a little girl killed by a drunk driver, the pedophile arrested and charged. These are all graphic manifestations of addictive behaviors. How pervasive is addiction in our society? Everywhere we turn we are inundated with advertisements designed to convince us we need particular

products or services. Alcohol, restaurants, casinos, pharmaceuticals, dating services — ads are everywhere. Pay attention next time you watch television or listen to the radio. See if more than a minute goes by before an ad comes at you.

Do you suppose these promotions are really for your benefit? I don’t think its any coincidence that as our lives become easier, we are drawn away from God and that subsequent void is filled by addictive behaviors provided through this world by Satan. Satan’s influence can be very subtle, very much like the analogy of placing a frog in a pot of water and slowly turning up the heat. The frog swims nonchalantly, not knowing he’s slowly being cooked to death.

We need to protect ourselves, our families and our fellowship of believers. So what can each of us do? Hebrews 12:1-2 states, “... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 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.”



Practically speaking, read God’s Word. Pay attention to the warnings about Satan. Surround yourself with believers who can help you. Follow God’s instructions — turn off the TV and computer, deny yourself all that sugar, find time for devotions (personal and family), and ask God to reveal the addictions in your life and to carry you through and past them.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for Jesus and the salvation you have offered for those who believe. Lord, I pray for wisdom and grace for believers. Protect us from the attacks of Satan. Give us the determination of Daniel to turn away from the things of the world that draw us away from you. Go before us all Lord. In Jesus’ wonderful and holy name. Amen.

Flanders is the director of the Association Retreat Center, the AFLC’s camp and conference center located in Osceola, Wis.