

THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2007

# AMBASSADOR

## book REVIEW issue

From finding peace  
with your career  
to finding peace in  
a relationship with  
Christ, we've got  
an issue full of  
books our faithful  
readers recommend.

# Your



# aroma

BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

**M**y family smells like cilantro.

So does the whole east side of the city where we live. We can't help it. Farmers grow it year around here. You might like the fragrance of fresh cilantro — that light and leafy green herb that makes your Mexican salsa taste so great — but when you have a whole field of it just to the south and east of your house, like us, you can't get away. It's staggering.

We live and breathe cilantro here.

We have cilantro hair, we wear cilantro T-shirts. We eat it on our tacos and we sprinkle it on our salads. But do I really have to smell it on my kids?

Last spring during a choir concert, my young son, Titus, sat on my lap. His fuzzy white hair tickled my nose. The smell of cilantro was overpowering. Seth, age 9, sat on my lap during a small group Bible study. Cilantro emanated from his yellow UCLA Bruins shirt. I was driving down Pleasant Valley Road the other day, enjoying the artery that connects our neighborhood to the dozens of farm fields between Camarillo and the Pacific Ocean, nine miles away. "They should call this road Red Salsa Boulevard," I thought.

But why fight it?

So much of living is all about the smell. If people are supposed to bloom where they're planted, why not enjoy the fragrance?

The same is true for followers of Christ. Paul tells us that real believers are supposed to smell. In II Corinthians

2:14 (NLT), he says, "Wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume." If we are really saved, people will not be able to ignore it. "Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God," Paul says. "But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing."

Should it surprise us that people find our faith in Christ offensive? "To those who are perishing we are a fearful smell of death and doom," says II Corinthians 2:16. "But to those who are being saved we are a life-giving perfume. ... We preach God's message with sincerity and with Christ's authority. And we know that the God who sent us is watching us."

For that reason, go smell up your world. Jesus sent you. Be a fragrance.

Smell for Christ when you interact with colleagues. Emit perfume when your daughter comes home. Be a fragrance at the coffee shop or the auto body shop. Mention the name of Christ in your e-mails to friends. Let your words be a sweet savor. Radiate, emanate, let it waft.

Don't be surprised if some people react. Some will love the word of the cross; some will hate it. But let the presence of Jesus take over the room. He's alive. He's real. He causes a reaction. He's impossible to ignore. Don't be ashamed of it. Let Him permeate your living places.

Even if it's as strong as the penetrating smell of cilantro in Camarillo.

*Johnson serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.*

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Books serve to show a man that those original  
thoughts of his aren't very new after all.  
— Abraham Lincoln

Wear the old coat and buy the new book.  
— Austin Phelps

[ No man can be called friendless who has God and the  
companionship of good books.  
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning ]

The function of a good book is to stand like a  
signpost guiding the reader to the Truth and  
the Life.  
— A. W. Tozer

To read without reflecting is like eating without  
digesting.  
— Edmund Burke



# focused purpose

BY ANDY TRAUB

**W**hen you go to heaven, God is not going to ask you why you weren't more like Mother Theresa. He's likely going to ask you why you weren't more like you." So says Dan Miller, author of "48 Days to the Work You Love," a book that gives hope to people who thank God for Fridays and believe the devil is in charge of Mondays.

Work is defined as effort exerted to do or to make something with purpose. Most people's purpose for work is singular, to earn a paycheck. A measly 50.7 percent of people are satisfied with their work, according to a 2003 poll. Miller makes the case that purposeful and financially successful work is found only after we recognize that God has uniquely gifted each of us with skills, personalities, values, and passions. A defining question to ask is this, what will be your greatest contribution to others? If you contribute only a paycheck, then you're missing the point of work.

Miller gives his readers 48 days because Scripture has so many examples of 40-day periods where God transformed lives. He gives readers an extra eight days to make plans of their own. You'll probably only need a day or two to read the book, but the process Miller walks his readers through will likely take those 48 days.

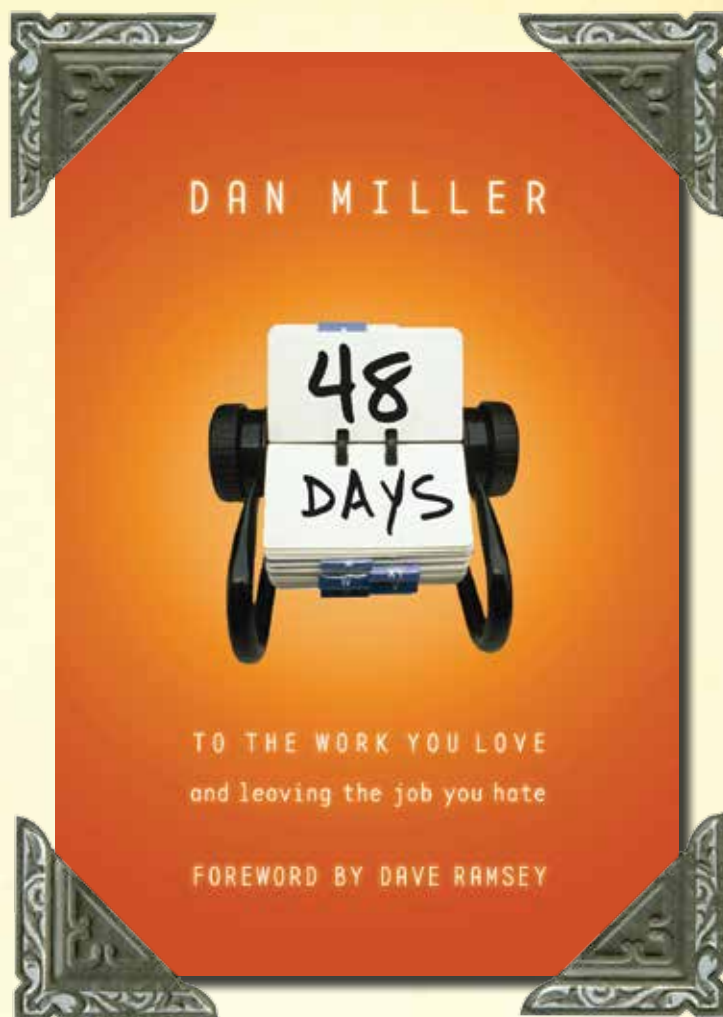
It's worth noting that this book is not an Evangelical trick to get readers to quit their secu-

lar jobs and follow God's call into full-time ministry. Miller notes that the Bible does not rank the godliness of occupations; only modern Christians do that. Instead, Miller gives ample evidence that God can use the janitor or the CEO if they in fact are following God's will for their careers. There is no distinction made between the PHP (paid holy person) and the insurance salesman. Doing work you love is the goal, not a specific career path.

Are you ready for a job change? You had better be because it's likely to come soon. The average American's job now lasts 3.2 years, and in our current economy there is no safe place to hide out until retirement (for examples see Enron or any American car company). Our current economy is vastly different than it was even 20 years ago. The question is not, "Will change reach you?" but, "How will you respond?"

To handle change, Miller writes that workers must take the time to understand what is changeless about themselves. Those things are God's handiwork. Passions and personality traits can lead us to a vocation, career and a job (yes, they're all different) that help us find the place where, as Frederick Beuchner wrote, "your deepest gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Miller gives his readers a map to find such a place.

There are strong warnings in this book for Christians who use something he terms "sanctified



ignorance.” This ignorance is the belief that if Christians love God then everything will work out when it comes to their employment — or many other areas of life. Miller contests that the truly godly life is one of focused purpose, not wandering trust. God’s will is when we take what He has shown us to be true of ourselves and apply that to the world’s needs. Believing that God will simply bless us because we acknowledge Him as Lord is like expecting your future spouse to come knock on your door and propose to you. That’s not why God gave us brains. God has given everyone the capacity to work and it takes work to find work that we love.

Perhaps most helpful in this manual for finding work you love are Miller’s thoughts on failure. Getting laid off or being downsized can be the best thing that ever happened to someone. Just as forest fires clear undergrowth, making way for new growth, the refining fire of failure can produce new opportunities. Even recurring patterns of failure can produce teachable moments. Sadly, many people fear losing the job they hate more than they do the uncertainty that comes from a fresh start found if they quit that miserable job.

What is most important to employers? Experience, education or productivity? That’s simple, productivity. Miller answers all of these questions with wisdom and simplicity. There are tips on building your resume, how to ace an interview and how to negotiate a fair salary. He cautions readers on what jobs to avoid — multi-level companies, invention marketing and work-at-home scams — while encouraging readers to consider franchises, home-based businesses and starting a small business of their own.

This book will likely cause you to take a hard look at your employment and your unique giftedness. It may give you permission to stop accepting mediocrity in your career and instead find a different and more fitting career (as it did for me). But fear not, Miller’s wisdom is gentle, enjoyable, biblical and empowering. It is worth taking 48 days to find the work you love.

*Traub is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.*

TITLE:  
48 Days to the  
Work You Love  
AUTHOR:  
Dan Miller  
PUBLISHER:  
B&H Publishing  
Group  
Nashville, Tenn.  
PAGES:  
224

Miller answers many other career questions. Where should I go within my company if I do like my current job? Moving up might end up letting you down.





# share a GOOD BOOK

"Live the questions  
now. Perhaps then,  
someday far in the  
future you will  
gradually, without  
even noticing it,  
live your way into  
the answer."

~ Rainer Maria Rilke  
"Letters to a Young Poet"



BY PASTOR MARK MOLSTRE



Often called the father of communism, Karl Marx was referring to the alphabet when he said, “Give me 26 lead soldiers and I will conquer the world.” Marx believed in the power of the written word to pass on his ideology, influence the minds of people and change the direction of nations. Although Marx’s ideology did not conquer the world, he was right in his belief that the written word has the potential to greatly influence people.

As a Christian, I need God’s Word to fill me and inspire me with His truth and instruction. This need to fill myself with God’s Word is primary and cannot be compromised. Yet, there are other words that can also provide important and needed spiritual insights. Godly Christian authors, through their books, have offered much spiritual counsel.

I have often been reading a book by a Christian author and found myself inspired in my faith. Or in reading, I may find a clear Christian and godly perspective on life and faith that proves useful. In these times, I often make a point of purchasing an extra copy or two when I make my next book purchase. I do this to have a resource available to those who have spiritual questions or are struggling with the issues these books address.

Here in Lake Stevens, Wash., I’ve found people to be so busy and scheduled that handing them a book with a strong personal endorsement and the challenge to read has often been an effective and necessary way of reaching out to a struggling Christian. With a book in hand, personal time can be carved out by the individual; through their reading, godly wisdom is absorbed.

Because books are read over a period of time, valuable moments to reflect upon truth and make application can arise. I often receive glowing testimony of how effective the

book has been to the needy soul. I must also say, as a pastor, I often have people coming to me with life issues with which I don’t have much experience or special insight. Yet, other godly leaders have had the experiences and special insights — and they have written about them. To have this resource to help those who are struggling in their faith is of great value. Think of how many co-workers you know who are struggling with life issues and faith. Giving them a Christian book with biblically sound guidance could be just what those friends need.

Occasionally, there has been a book that seems to fit a preaching series or a church emphasis. In these times, purchasing quantities of the book and offering them to the congregation has been effective. I may purchase a quantity of an inspiring paperback book on missions during Missions Month and challenge my congregation to take one home with the promise: “I will read this book within two months.”

K.P. Yohannan’s book, “Revolution in World Missions” was offered in this way and was very effective in its reach. A couple of other books I’ve used were the relatively inexpensive books by Lee Strobel, “The Case For Faith” and “The Case For Christ.” Both of these books are powerful presentations of the solid truth of our faith. Using “The Case For Christ” during the season of Christmas and “The Case For Faith” during Lent was effective.

The numbers and quality of godly books available to Christians today are amazing. Ask your pastor to recommend a book to you and start reading. If the book inspires you in your faith, it may inspire others, also. Take the initiative and purchase another copy or two and ask the Lord to open your eyes to see the person with whom God wants you to share the book.

*Molstre is pastor of Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.*



# put feet TO FAITH

BY JOAN CULLER







like any good teacher, Jesus makes frequent use of questions. In fact, He seems to have a question for every person who comes to Him seeking growth in their spiritual lives. “Do you want to be made well?” “Why do you call me good?” “Who do you say that I am?”

“Do you love me?” These are just a few of the questions He uses to challenge and encourage His hearers to incorporate His message into their own lives, to put feet on their faith and take it out into the world.

In “Dead Man Walking,” Sister Helen Prejean reveals herself to be an ardent follower of Christ, listening for His questions and then going wherever they lead her. She sees herself as an “ordinary person who became involved in extraordinary events.”

Growing up in a loving, religious family, she was taught to pray every night for “the poor who have no place to sleep.” She became a nun and for many years lived out the faith she had known as a child when “what counted was a personal relationship with God, inner peace, kindness to others, and heaven when this life was gone.” She resisted seeing where this good foundation of belief might lead her in living out the sanctified life.

At a church conference in 1980 she was confronted with the first of a series of tough questions that she couldn’t ignore. The speaker, a sociologist, described some of the economic inequities in the world. Did her audience know that two-thirds of the world’s people live at or below subsistence level? And that the United States, which comprises 6 percent of the world’s population, consumes 48 percent of the world’s goods? Finally, the question that made it all become personal — “What were we (each) to do about such glaring inequities?” She says, “I left the meeting and began seeking out the poor. This brought me one year later to the St. Thomas housing development.”

The poor for whom Sister Helen had prayed were now real to her: the 17-year-old girl with two children, the teenage boy who could make \$20 by “running a bag” of cocaine down the street, the welfare mothers trying to decide if getting a job was worth losing their Medicaid health insurance. She writes, “Almost every family I meet in St. Thomas has a relative in prison.” So when a group ministering to prisoners asked her to become a pen pal to a death-row inmate, she responded, “Sure.” It seemed to fit in with her other work at St. Thomas.

After writing to and then meeting Pat Sonnier, a murderer awaiting execution, the questions come fast and furious: “What’s it like to be on Waiting for Death Street?” “What’s it like to have done something really bad, really evil, something irreparable?” “How law-abiding would I be (without the protections and supports I had had as a child)?” As the people of St. Thomas gave poverty a human face, Sonnier did the same for criminals, even those who had committed terrible crimes. She felt his intense isolation and loneliness. She says, “I abhor the evil he has done. But I sense something, some sheer and essential humanness, and that ... draws me most of all.”

The questions allowed Sister Helen to see Pat Sonnier as more than the worst thing he had done in his life. He was also a son, a father, a brother, a child of God. As his spiritual advisor, she accompanied him to his execution and witnessed it. She says, “I can’t bear the thought that you would die without seeing one loving face. I will be the face of Christ for you. Just look at me.”

TITLE:  
Dead Man Walking  
AUTHOR:  
Sister Helen Prejean  
PUBLISHER:  
Vintage Books  
New York, N.Y.  
PAGES:  
288

Sister Helen’s experiences on death row changed her forever. She says, “Even the way I pray is changing. Before, I had asked God to right the wrongs and comfort the suffering. Now I know — really know — that God entrusts those tasks to us.” The empathy she has learned turns next to the crime victims. “Do I have to take sides?” she wonders. In time she helps to establish a victim assistance group. She writes, “Better I ... try to help ten real hurting

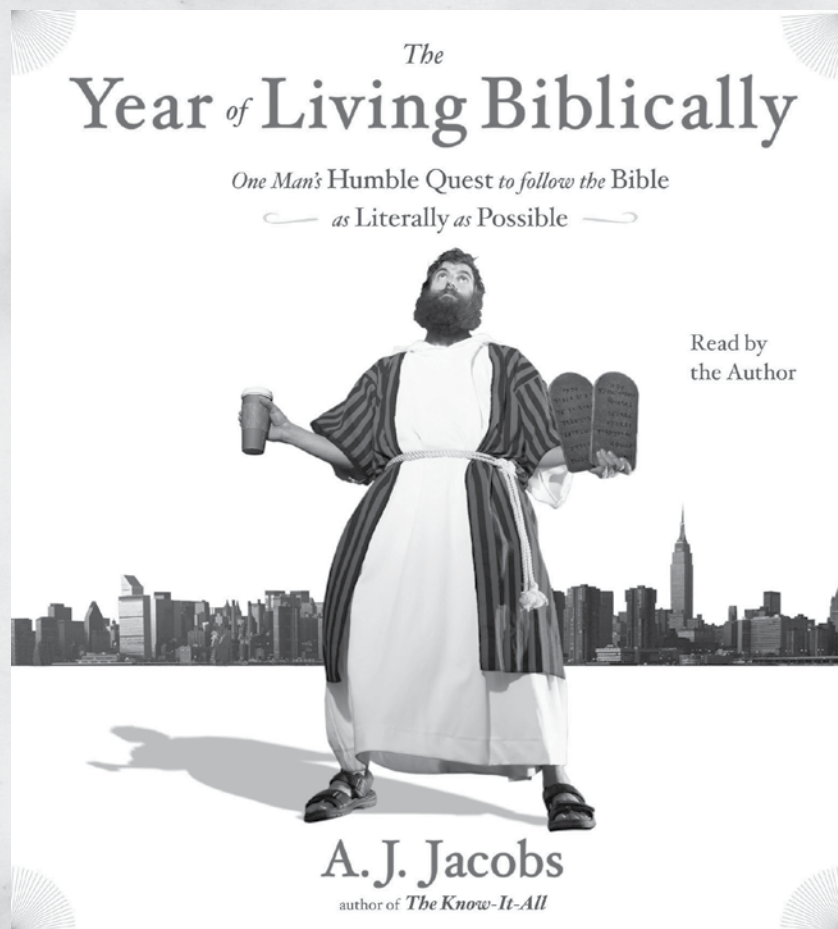
people, or nine or one — than to be overwhelmed and withdraw and do nothing — or write an academic paper on ‘The Problem of Evil.’”

Reading this book made me think hard about the death penalty. However, it made me think even harder about the Christian life and how to live it. How often do I stick safely with the answers I have (or think I have) instead of listening for the questions Jesus might be posing? Am I taking the time to listen, to really listen to God? Will I risk going where the questions take me without knowing where I might end up? Am I willing to change the way I think in order to see the world from God’s perspective? The disciples had to answer these questions, and so do we. I encourage you to read “Dead Man Walking” and then try to listen for your own set of questions, the ones Jesus is asking you.

*Culler is a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.*

# why we OBEY

BY LOIS GROTHE







was fortunate enough to come across an advance reader's edition of A. J. Jacobs' journal of his foray into living exactly as the Bible says — well, as exactly as is humanly possible.

Laid out like a diary, Jacobs writes his observations about himself and his friends and family's reaction to his spiritual journey. You will be able to find it on bookshelves this month.

Jacobs, an agnostic of Jewish heritage, wanted to explore religion but had no idea how to begin.

In his journal, he tells of his ex-uncle, Gil, described as a spiritual omnivore who spent a period of time living biblically. While describing Gil to a friend, Jacobs realized he needed to follow the Bible, literally. His three main reasons for doing so were: to write the book; he thought it would be his visa to the spiritual world; and to explore the topic of biblical literalism.

What follows is a humorous glimpse into the spiritual journey of one man.

Jacobs planned his observation period carefully. He had to decide which version of the Bible to use and identify specifically what following the Bible literally means. He questioned whether to obey only the Old Testament, or the New Testament, or both. He asked himself if he should have guides for this journey and, if so, who they should be. He debated, what exactly are the laws in the Bible and how many are there? After

answering these questions, he started his observations on Sept. 1, 2005.

Jacobs' narrative kept me interested page after page. Sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, his comments certainly ring true in many situations. On the first day he wrote that from the moment he woke up he was worried about breaking a biblical law. He reflected that many laws would be good for him: no lying, coveting, and stealing. He noted that some of the rules seemed strange, neurotic, and sure to alienate others. Still others were federally outlawed. For example: destroy idols, kill magicians, sacrifice oxen.

Jacobs thought if he acted faithfully and demonstrated godly love, he would become faithful and God-loving. He decided that if he prayed every day, then he would eventually believe in the One he prayed to every day.

Does Jacobs embrace Christianity, become saved and have a personal relationship with Jesus? No. But he is changed. He does

cringe when others take the name of God in vain. He tries very hard to keep the Ten Commandments. But he has missed out on the whole point behind the Bible: the relationship with God. I encourage you to read this because it is important to see why "acting" the role of a Bible believer is not the same as being a believer.

*Grothe is a member of Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.*

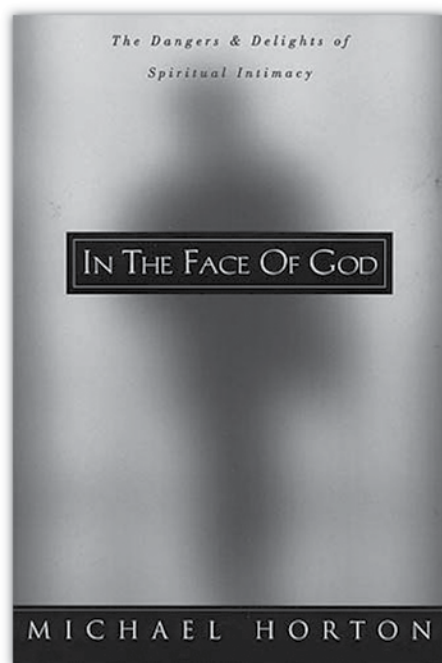
TITLE:  
The Year of Living  
Biblically  
AUTHOR:  
A.J. Jacobs  
PUBLISHER:  
Simon & Schuster,  
New York, N.Y.  
PAGES:  
400  
RELEASE DATE:  
October 9, 2007





# resisting the fads of TODAY

BY PASTOR DEAN IVERSON







Michael Horton's "In the Face of God," is a book you will turn to time and time again. Why? Horton has — in a reverent, respectful, and biblical way — challenged my own idea of the way I approach God.

He writes in the introduction, "I wrote this book because of a growing concern that our culture is being swept into a new era not of secularism, but of superstition, and because the evidence seems to support the idea that even contemporary evangelical Christians are not sufficiently resisting the fads of our age."

With this in mind Horton compares some of the ways God was approached in the historical, biblical record and the ways God is approached today. In a careful study Horton shows how the mysticism of our culture has encroached upon evangelical thinking to the detriment of our understanding of the holiness, awesomeness, and majesty of God. He

says, "The clear message from Genesis to Revelation is either go to hell with your own righteousness, or go to heaven with the righteousness of Christ credited to your account by faith alone. Faith in Christ is saving; faith in anything or anyone else is superstition."

Horton describes how we have mistakenly come to God as seekers instead of sinners and in doing so failed to make any connection with God on His terms. He shows the futility of approaching God on our own terms, which leaves us in bondage to our sin. We fail to come to the realization of our own wickedness, and think everything is okay when in reality it is not.

Horton's book is a good study on the emptiness of the way of glory versus the redeeming qualities of the way of the cross. With

chapter titles like, "Too Close for Comfort," "How to be Too Spiritual," "Age of the Spirit or Spirit of the Age," "Receiving Christ," and "The Way of the Cross," you are sure to be enthralled by the holiness and majesty of God.

Reading this book has deepened my confidence in the Word of God. Horton is not bashful in proclaiming the truth of God's Word or the authority it wields. He provides a careful study of history and what the Bible says concerning subtle and not so subtle Gnostic influences on our view of God.

Through Scripture Horton has helped me understand more clearly the holiness of God. This book has placed in my heart a deeper,

more profound fear and love for God and shown how Gnostic influences in our society can erode reverence for God. Those influences tend to draw people inside themselves to find God when in reality we must be drawn outside ourselves — to the cross of Jesus — to approach God.

Horton also provides a biblical perspective of how those Gnostic influences have even permeated our worship of God and cheap-

ened our view of God. This has strengthened my own resolve to fear and love God in a more reverent way. Awe for the Creator of heaven and earth will only increase when we acknowledge that what the Bible says about us — and God — is true.

The appendixes are just as captivating as the chapters. Horton addresses spiritual drift in hymnody and worship and provides biblical answers to some very thoughtful questions. I highly recommend this book to anyone who seeks a deeper reverence of God.

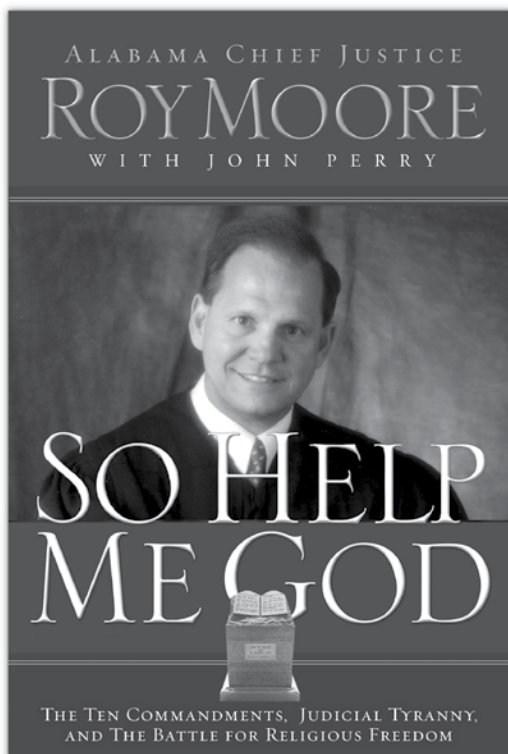
*Iverson serves Triumph Lutheran Church, Ferndale, Wash.*

TITLE:  
In the Face of God  
AUTHOR:  
Michael Horton  
PUBLISHER:  
Thomas Nelson Pub.  
Nashville, Tenn.  
PAGES:  
272



# basis of LAW

BY PASTOR DENNIS GRAY



**TITLE:**

So Help Me God

**AUTHOR:**

Roy Moore & John Perry

**PUBLISHER:**

B&H Publishing Group  
Nashville, Tenn.

**PAGES:**

275



he book titled, “So Help Me God,” by former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, Roy Moore, with co-writer John Perry, addresses the concern many have over the issue of freedom of religion and free speech, as well as the concern of having the freedom to recognize God in our society.

In our United States, the constitution is our “rule of law.” In no way can the U.S. Congress or any part of our government institute any kind of religion, making it a state religion. This rule of law gives us all the privilege and the right to express our own religious beliefs, whether in a court of law or elsewhere.

As well, no U.S. court can try a person because of their religious beliefs. We are free to believe as we are led, and we are free to express our belief in God, also as we are led. Congress, according to the rule of law, cannot be involved in establishing a religious system for all to follow. However, the individual person can follow whatever religious system they wish to follow, and individuals can speak on behalf of this system, refer to it and believe in it. Neither Congress nor the courts can bar people from these rights, even in a public courtroom.

Judge Moore believes his rights as a citizen and as a public servant were transgressed. His concern was for his personal freedom in or out of the courtroom. When he was asked and required to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the courthouse, he feels he was being denied his right as a citizen to express his religious views in public. Moore also believes he was being asked to deny his personal faith in God.

Moore was not forcing anyone to believe as he does. He was, however, stating that the judicial system of the United States is based on the Ten Commandments. He writes that he felt he had the right as a judge to view things through the eyes of God and through the use of the Ten Commandments. He was not establishing Christianity as the official religion of the United States of America.

The Constitution is the official rule of law and the Ten Commandments the basis for this rule of law. Moore claims that the people who opposed him had political interests and were not basing their opposition on the Constitution but upon their own ideas, views and concepts.

The book may be purchased on the Internet. It is worth reading.

*Gray serves Alma Free Lutheran, Argyle, Minn.*



# my favorite BOOKS

BY PASTOR JEROME ELNES

## 'Three Cups of Tea'

"Three Cups of Tea," by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, is a must-read! The story follows Mortenson's mission to promote peace in predominantly Muslim Pakistan by building one school at a time. The last count we heard was 58 schools built — most of them for girls.

My wife, Elaine, and I have a more than usual personal interest in the book because our daughter, Elenn Elness, is serving in her 16th year as a medical missionary doctor in Tank, Pakistan, under the World Mission Prayer League.

In the Muslim culture, if a pregnant mother is having difficulties delivering her child, her husband would rather let her die than have a male doctor attend the delivery. Many mothers and

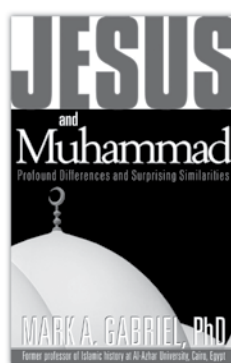
children are alive because of the female doctors at the Tank Christian Hospital. It is difficult to get and keep medical doctors in Pakistan because of the lack of good schools in the Northwest Frontier Province.

Elenn has sent a request that Mortenson would build a school in Tank so they can more easily get and retain Pakistani medical doctors and offset the madrassa schools of the Taliban. The need is great. On April 27 two men were shot and one arrested in the Oxford Middle School near the Tank Christian Hospital. They had attempted to kidnap the principal and solicit volunteers to be suicide bombers for the Taliban operating in the area.

Thank you for your prayers for the safety of the personnel at the Tank Christian Hospital.

## 'Jesus and Muhammad'

A book that would be good to read to gain insights and an understanding of Islam is "Jesus and Muhammad" by Dr. Mark A. Gabriel, former professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. The university



is recognized worldwide as the top Islamic university. Gabriel's remarkable and fascinating conversion from a top recognized Islamic scholar to a confessing Christian is included. His provocative and balanced historical comparison of Jesus — the founder of Christianity with 2 billion adherents — and Muhammad — the founder of Islam with 1.3 billion adherents — will shatter false images and enlighten you in scholastic comparison of their lives and teachings.

This is a must for teaching youths and Christians to understand Islam and the supremacy of the Christian faith.

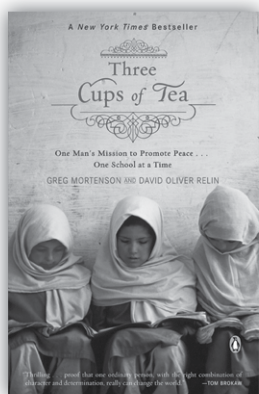
## 'The Heavenly Man'

"The Heavenly Man" by Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway is a good insight into what is happening now in the Henan Province of China where Lutheran missionaries brought the gospel. This remarkable and inspiring true story of Christians in China tells of a 16-year-old boy in Henan who experiences God's miraculous leading and answers to prayers. Brother Yun endures extreme persecution, suffering and imprisonment for the sake of Jesus. He eventually becomes a house church leader in Henan. To understand and pray for the world's fastest-growing church and what is taking place in

China, read this inspiring and challenging adventure.



*Elness is a former Lutheran Free Church missionary to Taiwan and Hong Kong. He serves Our Redeemer's Free Lutheran, Superior, Wis.*



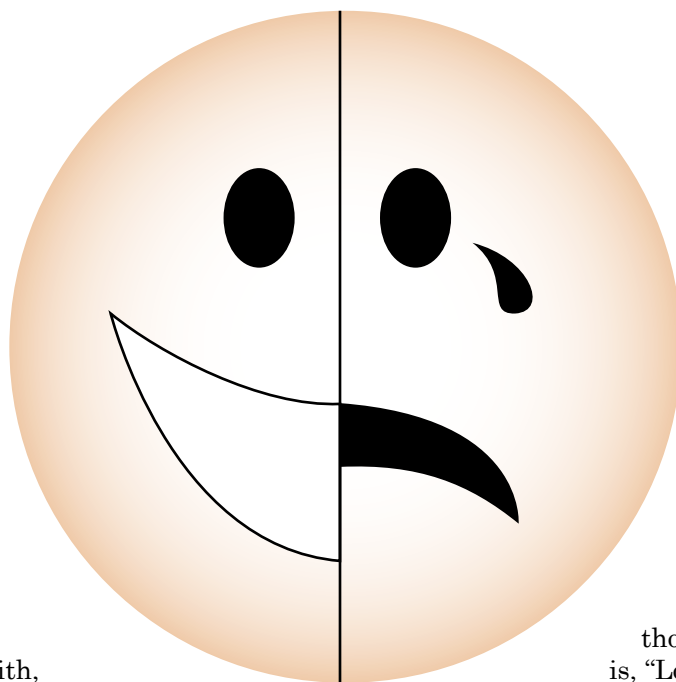
# *the good (& not-so-good)* NEWS

**D**uring every meeting we have as the World Missions Committee, Pastor Del Palmer (World Missions director) updates us on the situations in the various countries where the AFLC has active missions operations. It is not unusual for him to start his presentations with, "Gentlemen, I have good news and bad news ..." Or maybe he'll temper his account with, "Gentlemen, I have good news and not-so-good news ..."

A perfect example of this occurred in August, when we were able to meet with Pastor Dan Giles and Pastor Todd Schierkolk, AFLC missionaries serving in Jerez and Aguascalientes, Mexico. We discussed their mission work for an extended period of time. Along with their work in Jerez and Aguascalientes, the AFLC supports two other mission fields in Mexico: Pastor Samuel and Milton Flores and the Central Mexican Lutheran Church; and Pastor Gabriel Mercado in Obregon.

The not-so-good news: After many years endeavoring to work in these areas, all of these mission works are smaller, with churches struggling in numbers.

The good news: Most of these churches have very active children's ministries. For example, in Jerez, the average Sunday attendance is about 35 people. Yet Pastor Schierkolk says his children's club averages 65 children weekly. In addition, Pastor Giles, with the very timely



assistance of his daughter, Ingrid Giles, reported that the web site containing the Spanish translation of the Ambassador Sunday School curriculum is online and active ([www.iglesialuteranalibre.org](http://www.iglesialuteranalibre.org)). The material can be downloaded for free. So far, the site has recorded up to 3,500 downloads of the material per month.

I am a man with a simple thought pattern. So my question is, "Lord, why can't we only get good news?"

Of course, I know the answer. We are all sinners, and it is only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we receive any good news at all.

So with the good news we rejoice. And with the not-so-good news, we fall to our knees for grace.

Pray for the Giles and Schierkolk families in Mexico, along with the other Mexican mission works we support. Pray for those ministering around the world. If you don't have a copy of the World Missions Department's Family Album, may I encourage you to request one?

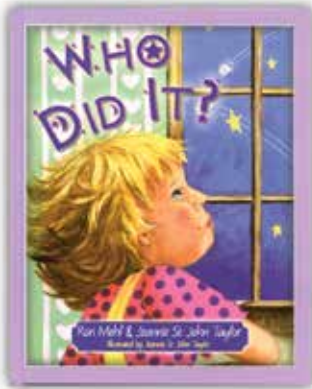
Keep all of our missionaries before the throne of grace, where we find the good news.

*Mattson, a member of United Free Lutheran, Greenbush, Minn., is a member of the AFLC's World Missions Committee.*



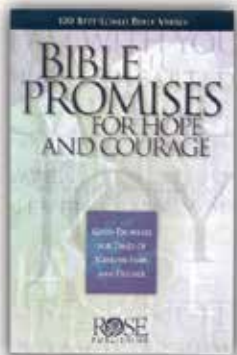
# resources

For more information on these resources, contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or email [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org).



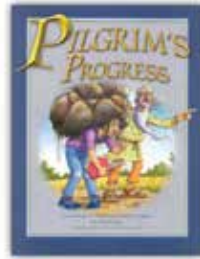
## Who Did It?

Combining vivid artwork with powerful text drawn from the questions God asked Job, this book presents the awesomeness of God in an uncomplicated, kid-friendly style. \$11.50



## Bible Promises for Hope and Courage

Over 100 Bible passages carefully chosen to reflect God's care for His children. Foldout pamphlet is appropriate for Bible study, personal devotions, or giving to someone in need of encouragement. \$3.95



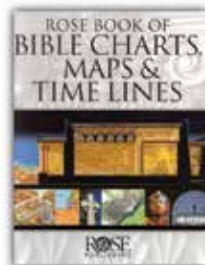
## Pilgrim's Progress

A fresh retelling of this classic story recounts the adventures and perils of Christian on his dangerous journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. In this fully illustrated and colorful book, the story is retold especially for kids. \$14.50



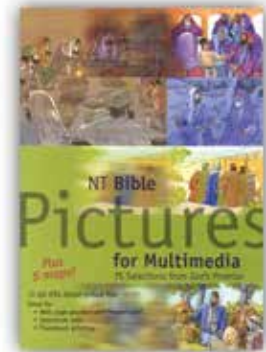
## Foxe's Book of Martyrs

From the first century stoning of Stephen through his own perilous time of Reformation-era England, Foxe recounts the lives, sufferings, and triumphant deaths of Christian martyrs. Hardcover classic edition. \$9



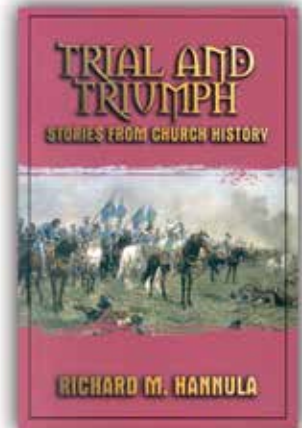
## Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines

Includes 180 pages of full-color Bible charts, maps, and time lines in a one-volume book. \$24.95



## New Testament Bible Pictures for Multimedia

CD-ROM containing 75 illustrations from New Testament Bible stories and five colorful maps include major stories of Jesus' birth and ministry, the last week of Jesus' life, and the time of the early church. (Old Testament edition also available.) Windows and Macintosh compatible. \$19.95



## Trial and Triumph STORIES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

This collection of 46 brief biographies shows the stirring trials and triumphs of many famous and lesser known fathers and mothers of our faith including Augustine, Charlemagne, Luther, Tyndale, Livingstone, and many others. Appropriate for family reading. \$16

# MIRACLE work

BY PASTOR ALLEN MONSON

**T**he journey of Calvary Free Lutheran began in January 1997 at a cookout in Apache Junction, Ariz. Bible studies followed this meeting until worship services were established in November 1998 in Gilbert, Ariz. The small congregation met at several different locations until property was purchased in November 2003 in East Mesa.

Work crews came the following January to build a beautiful facility in a community of needy families. God has since established several community-oriented ministries at Calvary, including a Wednesday Kids Klub, an adult day care center and a community food pantry based in our facility.

Our Saturday morning prayer warriors group is the foundation for ministry at Calvary. Each week people gather to seek God's presence and power in all that is done through our congregation. God has answered those prayers with miracle after miracle.

Our Kid's Klub program is just one miracle. Led by Pastor George and Barbi Marsteller, the Klub is a growing ministry. The majority of the children who attend aren't raised by their parents, but grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives. Most have no Christian heritage. But God's Word is being planted and we are seeing young lives changed. Calvary also supports a Good News Club at Taft Elementary, just three blocks from our church.

Another miracle is the food pantry. In December 2006, our south building was remodeled by work teams to provide room for the Community Food Pantry, which provides food boxes for families in our community every other Saturday. The boxes contain essential food items that we receive from the Mesa Food Bank. The number of families we serve continues to grow. Others come during the week as they have needs.

A third miracle is the use of the other half of our south building weekdays by Guthrie Mainstream as an adult day care center for the developmentally disabled. It is wonderful to see the love of Jesus shared with each person.

God is opening doors for new miracles every day.



ABOVE: Gordon Hove loads a box of food into the car for a food pantry patron.

RIGHT: Pastor Al Monson helps Ray Tollefson build a sign for the Community Food Pantry.



Calvary is located in a Hispanic community. A door of opportunity has recently opened to host English as a second language (ESL) classes. We see a potential to bring many Hispanics into our facilities each week for classes, leading to the possibility of Hispanic worship and ministry. We are also looking at offering an after-school program for children.

Many AFLC friends have traveled from the Midwest to help us with projects coordinated by AFLC Home Mission's Builder's Fellowship. Through them, God has blessed us by enabling us to complete numerous work projects on our property. Winter visitors also provide increased attendance, prayer, ministry and financial support. We also thank God for the members of the Home Missions Committee and their continued support.

God is building a body of Christ here in the desert. It's a miracle! He is showing Himself strong on our behalf. The work is not easy. There is much spiritual warfare. We ask you to pray for God's strength for the mission before us, for spiritual streams in the desert flowing to our community. To God be the glory!

*Monson serves Calvary Free Lutheran, a Home Missions congregation in Mesa, Ariz.*



# shepherding the SHEPHERDS

## AFLC pastor begins mentoring program

In the summer of 2006, while on a sabbatical, God placed within my heart a desire to serve pastors and lay leaders. The biblical example of Paul's mentoring care to pastors and lay leaders became my heart's vision.

Over the years of my ministry, I have come to better understand a particular need experienced by pastors and ministries. It is best explained by asking this question, "Who is shepherding the shepherds?" It is easy and right for us to give the answer, "God is." However, God usually works through people. Thus we ask, "Who is God raising up to do this task?"



Pastor Michael Brandt

As much as possible, our AFLC presidents have sought to provide pastoral care to pastors. Their care has been stellar. However, due to the wide scope of their responsibilities and our AFLC's growth, it has been an overwhelming task. Even with the assistance of our AFLC vice president, the needs of many pastors and lay leaders often go unmet. In many cases, the work and the workers are desperately struggling. When their care is neglected, workers burn out, spirits are weakened, hearts become

vulnerable, and ministry is hindered.

Therefore, with my encouragement, Abiding Savior Free Lutheran of Sioux Falls, S.D., began the process of seeking a new senior pastor, a position I have joyfully filled for 16 years. At the same time, the congregation gave its blessing to the development of a mentoring ministry called Shepherding the Shepherds. Members of Abiding Savior's Board of Deacons oversees this ministry. It is a faith-based effort. The work will be financially supported through a combination of individual sponsors and the ministry honorariums of congregational partnering agreements utilizing this ministry. All sponsor gifts and partnership moneys will be paid directly to Abiding Savior — Shepherding the Shepherds.

Shepherding the Shepherds seeks to follow Paul's example. His mentoring ministry gave care to individual pastors, guidance to churches, and inspired new church plants. As of Aug. 1, I have been devoting my mentoring efforts to serving our new senior pastor at Abiding Savior, as well as embarking on the exciting call to serve pastors and lay leaders. To date, eight pastors and six congregations have requested shepherding care.

For more information on this ministry, please call either (605) 371-3800 or 351-1159. I can also be reached at [pastorbrandt@knowingthesavior.org](mailto:pastorbrandt@knowingthesavior.org).

## Pastor Gene Barnum Smith remembered

Pastor Gene Barnum Smith, 87, of Osceola, Wis., died July 10 after a one-year struggle with tongue cancer. Born July 6, 1920, in Montevideo, Minn., he was the son of Raymond Smith and Alice Barnum. He married Myrtle on June 25, 1949. They were married for 57 years. She preceded him in death.

He grew up in St. Paul, Minn., graduating from Central High in 1938. He earned degrees in electrical engineering and education from the University of Minnesota. During this time he also served two years in the U.S. Navy as a teacher. They moved to Minnetonka, Minn., in 1959. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s he enjoyed a career in radio as announcer and engineer for KTIS Christian radio in Minneapolis, KFNN of Fargo, N.D., and KWFM in Minneapolis. Multi-talented, Barnum also taught math, Spanish and engineering in public, trade and Catholic schools for 10 years. In 1969, Barnum felt the call to formal Christian ministry and graduated from AFLTS in 1971. After serving three interim pastorships, he accepted the call to be full-time pastor of the Congregational Church of Spring Valley,

Wis. He served there for eight years. In 1983 he and his wife moved to East Farmington Township, Wis., across the road from the Association Retreat Center in Osceola.

Surviving are one son, Timothy; three daughters, Nancy, Dawn, and Heidi; as well as six grandchildren and four step-grandchildren.

The memorial service was held July 16 at Amery Free Lutheran Church, Amery, Wis., with Pastor David Johnson officiating, along with interim Pastor Richard Gunderson and AFLC Vice President Elden Nelson.

"Dad did a remarkable job of supplemental Christian ministry up to the end," said Smith's daughter, Heidi, a 1980 AFLBS graduate. "Dad had wit and humor packed into his well-organized pockets, wearing them as his own clothes, ever available to be shared ... As a willing and active participant in life he would acknowledge most everyone with some amused comment on the place or hour they shared. Dad's gracious 'you first' allowed the other guy to carry the conversation. His two cents, if sought, was worth \$20. God used Dad to guide others to Him in some mighty ways no ordinary man would have seen. His meekness, not weakness, will always be in our memory."

# OUR *example*

BY FAYLIN MYHRE

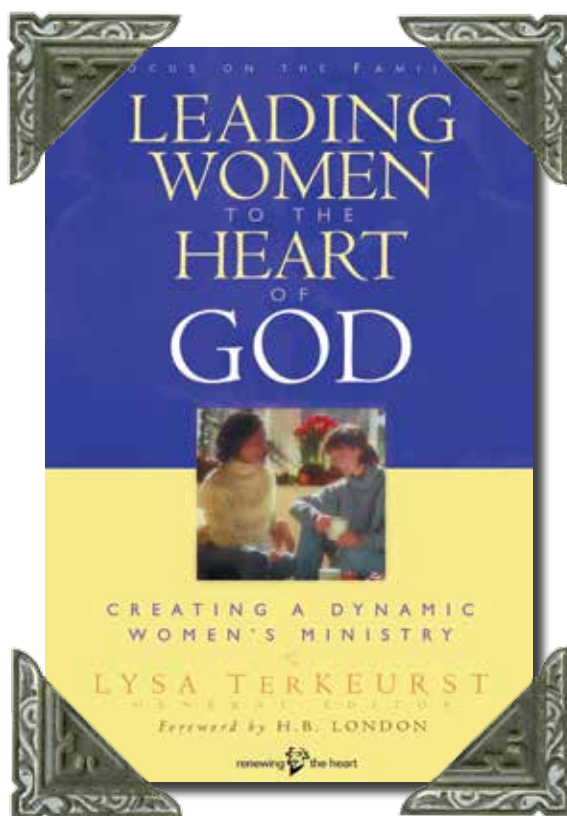
**W**hen I was asked to write this book review I thought, "Great, An excuse to go to the bookstore!"

There were many books on leadership, but they were written mostly by men and for men in leadership. I was looking for a book written by women for women in leadership and ministry. After scouring the shelves I happened upon "Leading Women to the Heart of God." The title had me. As Christians, the Lord has called us to do just that, lead people to His heart. As Christian women I believe we have a specific calling to lead our sisters to our Father's heart.

I dived in. From the start the authors challenged me, encouraged me, and gave me direction and information as they shared from their own experiences in leadership and ministry. Lysa Terkeurst is the general editor, and there are contributions from Michelle McKinney Hammond, Sharon Jaynes, and many others. I found the book to be a very helpful tool.

Beginning with "First Things First," the writers call and minister to the hearts and lives of the readers. Terkeurst writes, "First, let's start with the flame in our own hearts, realizing we can't lead others any farther than we've already journeyed ourselves." We begin with our personal, intimate relationship with God. This section then moves into dealing with life in a fishbowl, being equipped versus feeling equipped, confidence in leading and teaching, and finding balance between our personal lives and the ministry God has called us to.

The writers then work through the processes of starting, building, expanding and maintaining a dynamic



**TITLE:**  
Leading Women to the  
Heart of Christ  
**PUBLISHER:**  
Moody Publishers,  
Chicago  
**PAGES:** 288

women's ministry. Where does one start? Mary Ann Ruff writes on the importance of prayer. Ministry is conceived through prayer, it takes shape and form in prayer, workers are provided through prayer, and prayer will vitalize and revitalize or revive your ministry.

The writers use biblical principles throughout the book. Jesus' own ministry is the example we can look to when we seek to love and minister to people — especially the women — He brings into our lives. Cheri Jimenez writes, "His entire leadership style during His three years of ministry was to invite, instruct and influence others for the furtherance of the gospel. Jesus accepted individuals as they were, taught them the truth, and kept them accountable."

Although the book is written by women who have been involved in large ministries, and some of the information is more applicable to larger women's groups, I still found it to be a helpful book that was easy to read. At first I thought, "How does this apply to my little country church and our tiny WMF?" Jesus reminded me that every ministry begins with One — Jesus. He then calls us one at a time to join Him in His vision

that all would come to the knowledge of the truth. He is the truth. He has not called me to reach every woman; He has called me to reach the one whom He brings into my life today. Join me and Jesus; let's lead women to the heart of God.

*Myhre, a member of Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., is the women's outreach coordinator for the WMF.*



# Kiefert writes family's story of loss and faith

**H**ow do you handle the loss of a child? Where do you turn for answers? Death does not have to be a mystery. Join author and father, Dwight Kiefert, as he shares his story: the tragic loss of a young son, Matthew, killed by a drunken school bus driver in 1987, and the direction and faith he and his family clung to in their darkest hour. More than 95 percent of marriages that suffer the loss of a child result in divorce — a staggering statistic for believers and non-believers alike. “On Our Way Home” is one family’s true story of finding faith and hope in the face of tragic loss and offers guidance for those seeking consolation or the knowledge to console a loved one.

Kiefert, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D., currently lives in rural North Dakota with his wife, Robbin. He also serves on the AFLC’s Commission on Evangelism, which allows him to travel throughout the US sharing his testimony and conduct Christian witness training seminars.

For the first 30 years of Dwight’s life he was lost, but through the loss of their son, he has come to understand that nothing in this world is more important than having a saving relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The Kiefert’s have made a ministry of sharing the good news with all who will listen, that they, too, can have their sins forgiven and live forever in paradise.

For more information or to order this book, contact Tate Publishing toll free at (888) 361-9473, visit their web site at [www.tatepublishing.com](http://www.tatepublishing.com) or email [info@tatepublishing.com](mailto:info@tatepublishing.com).



## AFLBS school year begins

The AFLBS school year began officially on Sept. 5 when the first classes of the year were held. However, students began arriving on campus as early as Sept. 1, with the bulk of the students moving in on Sept. 2. Two days of orientation were held before the first classes began. At right, men’s residence head



Eric Swenson (center) along with his wife, Kristi, welcome a new student to campus.

## El Campo church celebrates 20 years

**M**embers of Faith Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas, celebrated the congregation’s 20th anniversary on Sept. 1-2. Special events included a Walk on Water play day, games, worship services, fellowship meals and an ice cream social. Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, spoke at both a Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon celebration services. The congregation, which is served by Pastor Clyde Grier, hosted the 2002 annual conference.

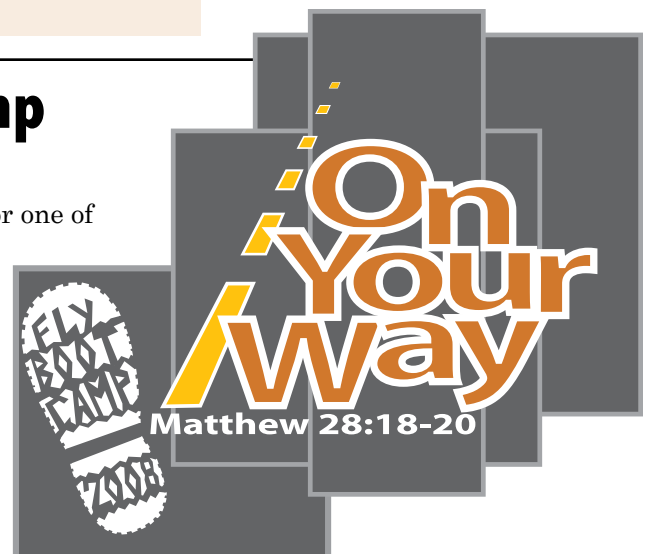
## Youth Ministries

## FLY Boot Camp

**D**id you have a great time this summer at FLY? Are you wondering how you can take what you learned to the next level? Maybe you’re ready to make plans for the next step in your Christian walk. How about FLY Boot Camp, a week designed to bring out your best self. The goal of the camp is to “equip students as disciples and train them in personal witnessing for evangelism.”

Start planning now for one of the best weeks in your life. FLY Boot Camp 2008, “On Your Way,” is planned for July 14-19 at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis.

For more information, visit [www.aflc.org/youth](http://www.aflc.org/youth).



**Kirk Thorson**, a 2007 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained Aug. 26 at Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., with Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, officiating and Pastor Jeff Swanson leading the service. Thorson recently accepted a call to serve Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore, N.D., and Middle Grove Lutheran, Mekinok, N.D.

**Pastor Lynn Qualm** has resigned as pastor of United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb. His future plans are not certain.

**Pastor Jerome Nikunen**, Minneapolis, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Dovre Lutheran and Union Lake Lutheran, Winger, Minn.

**Pastor James Westgate**, Cranberry Township, Pa., has accepted a call to serve St. Matthew Lutheran, Millerstown, Pa. Westgate had been serving St. John's Evangelical Lutheran of Lovi, Cranberry Township.

**Karen Floan**, Plymouth, Minn., has accepted the position as secretary to the president of the AFLC. She will begin her work at the AFLC headquarters building on Oct. 1, when Pastor Elden Nelson assumes his new role as president. Floan, who is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., will leave her position with the AFLBS Vision department. She will take over for **Charlotte Fruehauf**, who has served as secretary to Pastor Robert Lee for more than 12 years. Fruehauf, who plans to retire, will continue with her position maintaining the subscription list for "The Lutheran Ambassador."

**Courtney Jacobi**, Calamus, Iowa, has accepted the position of women's residence head at AFLBS. Jacobi, a 2004 graduate of AFLBS, has previously worked as a dorm assistant in the girls dorm.

**Eric Swenson**, an AFLTS senior, is serving as the men's residence head during the 2007-08 school year. Swenson is a 2002 graduate of AFLBS from Jewell, Iowa.

**Diane Brubakken** resigned as AFLC Parish Education secretary in June in order to continue her education in the Fargo area. **Sarah Daas** has been hired as the new part-time secretary and began employment Aug. 27. Sarah is a recent graduate of Northwestern College and a 2003 graduate of AFLBS. Sarah's husband, Jesse, is a student at Northwestern College, pursuing a degree in Christian counseling.

**Juanita Jones**, 71, wife of Pastor Gary Jones, who serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pleasanton, Texas, died Aug. 28. She worked for many years as the administrator of an assisted living nursing home. Besides their work in Texas, the couple served four terms in Cordova, Alaska, with the Alaska Mission, as well as ministries in Illinois, Arkansas, Wisconsin and Washington. Surviving are her husband; one son, Tim (Roxanne) Jones; one daughter, Pamela (Mike) Smith; one brother, Bud Winings; and four grandchildren. She was preceded in death by one son, Gary Jr. The service was Sept. 1 with her husband officiating.

**Ebenezer Lutheran Church**, Northwood, N.D., sustained considerable damage when a tornado ravaged the rural town on Aug. 26. The church, which is served by Pastor Tim Johnson, may be unsalvageable. No building in the town was left undamaged, including the parsonage, which was completely destroyed. "May God use our unsettledness to show Himself strong," wrote Pastor Johnson. "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever!"

## ► August memorials

### AFLBS

Fred Ficken, Margaret Visser, Iona Korhonen, Raymond Nyhus, Mary Steffensen, Tom Wicks, Harriet Lerud, Joyce Hoff, Evelyn Cline, Maxine Widner

### General Fund

Vylar Richardt

### Home Missions

Mrs. Ray Evenson  
Ernest Johnson

### Parish Education

Henry Christopherson

### WMF

Bonnie Burt, Norman

Becker, Marvin  
Lindroth, Marilyn  
Hanson, Anne Lanter

### World Missions

Dennis Torkelson  
Carolyn Dyrud  
Ernest Johnson  
Wallace Nelson  
Henry Christopherson

### AFLTS

Kevin Skerva, Iona  
Korhonen, Bill  
Bisgard, Bernice  
Nelson, Mary  
Steffensen, Arnold  
Rokke, Goldie Berven  
Gray, Merle Gray,  
Alvina Faldet, Maxine  
Widner

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- August 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$28,834	\$257,855	71
Youth Ministries	73,114	2,930	47,142	64
Evangelism	108,236	6,566	70,545	65
Parish Education	107,052	8,655	50,879	48
Seminary	216,097	22,589	139,401	65
Bible School	343,545	40,924	232,390	68
Home Missions	316,413	35,237	207,616	66
World Missions	287,808	24,099	155,801	54
Personal Support	407,198	35,872	326,862	80
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$205,705	\$1,488,491	67
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$188,058	\$1,362,052	68
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.				



# meet new PEOPLE

**W**hen Ben Carson was a young boy he believed he was the dumbest kid in his school. He didn't like it, but he thought there was nothing he could do about it. Carson's mother didn't believe that. When she talked about Ben and his brother she said, "I've got two smart boys."

When Carson was in the fifth grade, his mother told him and his brother they could watch no more than three television programs a week. She also had a plan for how they were going to spend their free time when they weren't watching TV. "You boys are going to go to the library and check out books. You're going to read at least two books every week. At the end of each week you'll give me a report on what you've read."



Pastor Craig Johnson

The rule seemed impossible to Ben, but his mother insisted. "Bennie, if you can read, honey, you can learn just about anything you want to know. The doors of the world are open to people who can read."

Carson's mother was barely able to read herself. When her boys would bring their book reports to her she looked them over and voiced her approval, but wasn't sure what they said. She was certain, however, it would make a difference in her boys' lives if they became readers.

Carson was an inner-city kid who had numerous encounters with racial prejudice. He had a single mom who was on the low end of the economic ladder. But doors opened for him as he read. He eventually became the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. He tells his story in the book, "Gifted Hands."

It has been said that after a person reaches adulthood the only things that can truly change them are the people they meet and the books they read. What can bring about the greatest change in our lives is meeting the Lord through His book, the Bible. We can also, through other books, meet people whom God can use to teach us and help us grow.

We can meet people like Ben Carson. From his inspiring story we can learn how God can use a determined mom to change the direction of a young life.

We can meet missionaries who served the Lord long ago in faraway places. Through reading his biography, "They Called Him Father," I recently met Father Heyer, a Lutheran pastor in the 1800s who became a missionary to India. The AFLC India has its roots in the work he began.

When I was in seminary I met Hudson Taylor, a missionary to China in the late 1800s. Reading of his faith in God to provide for his needs and his willingness to sacrifice so that people could hear the good news of Jesus had a lasting impact on my life.

I first met AFLC Pastor Michael Brandt and his late wife, Jeannie, more than 30 years ago, but recently, in

It has been said that after a person reaches adulthood the only things that can truly change them are the people they meet and the books they read.

some ways, I've met them in a new way. I've read the book, "Sent and Received." It tells of their trial battling cancer and of Jeannie's eventual death. In their book, we meet their family in their trial, and we see how the Lord met them and helped them along the way.

As he was coming toward the end of his life the apostle Paul wrote Timothy and asked him to visit him in prison and bring some things with him, "especially the parchments" (II Timothy 4:13, NIV). We don't know exactly what the parchments were, but it appears they were comparable to books of our day. In commenting on this passage Charles Spurgeon wrote: "He has been preaching at least for 30 years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books!"

Doors can open up for us, we can meet all kinds of interesting people when we read. Best of all, when we read God's inspired book, the Bible, we meet the One, "The Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

*association retreat center*

BY MIKE FISK

# GoMISSION

**H**aving grown up in the church, I've heard countless sermons on the Great Commission. Most of the teaching was aimed at encouraging us to become missionaries. Innumerable slides of children in Africa and South America tugged at my heart.

As I grew older, missions took on a different flavor. "We are all missionaries!" I was told, and it was my responsibility to make sure that each of my friends was saved from the fires of hell.

I remember setting out to make sure that *everyone* in my class was converted. It didn't go well. Within weeks I became the class leper. As a matter of self-preservation my witness became dim.

In his book, "Wild At Heart," John Eldredge talks about how many of us (especially men) start our lives playing games in which we are the heroes. We make the winning shot in the championship game or conquer the invincible enemy. But something happens as we grow older. Life sets in.

Winning shots aren't easy to come by. Losses are more frequent than victories. As Eldredge puts it, each time we lose in life, a part of our motivation to try is taken from us. Either we become careful, or we stop trying.

After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus left His disciples with instructions for life — the Great Commission. In essence, we are told to introduce Jesus to others and help them grow in His love and grace. Sounds much easier than it is. Living the Christian life is difficult enough without adding the responsibility of winning people to Christ.

There are any number of reasons why we may shy

away from Jesus' vision. We may feel inadequate to the task because of past failures or a lack of training. In reality, these thoughts are the lies of the enemy.

Eldredge reminds us that we are warriors with all the weapons we need to succeed. Sometimes we may feel like we are marching into battle carrying a garden hoe, obscurely positioned in the middle of the pack where we can do little harm. But that is not so. You are part of a story being written by God. As the author of your story, God has placed you in the starring role. There is no understudy. You are the number one person in the plot.

That's where Romans 8:11-12 comes in. This passage follows the Apostle Paul's confession that he is like the rest of us. He struggles with sin. "The very thing I don't want to do, I find myself doing!" Paul says, "and the things I want to do I don't get done!" Isn't that what keeps most of us from living the life of a victorious warrior? But Paul doesn't stop there. In the next verses he gives us hope.

The very Spirit of God, the same Spirit that had the power to raise Jesus from the dead, is the one who gives you life. As a warrior, you don't go into battle under your own power. You go empowered by the Holy Spirit. That's why I call these verses the Go Mission. We *go* in His power and not our own.

The next time the battle gets rough and you are ready to give up, remember that it isn't intended to be fought with your power. The power of the risen Lord is within you!

*Fisk is the director of development for the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.*