

THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2008

AMBASSADOR

Man
woman
teen
senior
married
single ...

id e n t i t y



we
all
belong
to the
body of
Christ.

Time for rest

BY PASTOR ARLIN OLSON

Our youngest son, Daniel, wanted to make a bow and some arrows. So we went out to a slough, found a willow branch that was the right size, and with a little carving fashioned a bow. Using smaller branches we made some arrows.

A few weeks later Daniel came to me and said that someone had left the bow strung; it no longer worked very well. It had lost its springiness and no longer had much strength.

When my wife, Ruth, and I attended a cardiac rehab course, we learned that exercise itself doesn't actually build up our bodies, rather it wears them down. It is during the periods of rest between times of exercise that our bodies are restored to better health and greater strength. Like the bow, if our bodies are always under stress they will weaken and lose their vitality. We all need periods of rest to be rejuvenated after times of work and activity. This is true of emotional and mental activity, as well.

We live in a world that tends to extremes, and it is hard to maintain a healthy balance between activity and rest. Maintaining an intensely busy lifestyle is held up as a virtue and adequate rest is often neglected. But to neglect rest will leave us less effective and weakened in the long run. It will also zap much of the joy out of life. This certainly is not God's way for us.

The Bible gives us a clear mandate to take work seriously and be diligent about it. There are abundant warnings against sloth and idleness, but there are also commands to rest. God instituted the Sabbath in the Old Testament, which is equivalent to Sunday for us today. I have always been thankful that I don't need to feel

pressure to work on Sunday. How good of God to command a day of rest to release us of the pressure that often drives us to keep working.

There are other passages of Scripture that make it clear God wants rest for us. Psalm 127:1-2 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves."

God has put order into the world; days are divided between light for work and darkness for rest. Weeks are divided into six days for work and one for rest. Years are divided into seasons that give change and rest from constant sameness.

God has packed this world full of incredible creations that we are meant to enjoy as a little foretaste of what eternity will be like. Creation reveals something of the Creator with whom we are meant to be in relationship. We miss out if we never pause to rest and look around us.

God has also given us family and friends to enjoy. It takes time to relate well with them, to joyfully give and take in relationship with them. Take time out with Jesus. Take time to rest and enjoy some of the goodness that is a reflection of His heart for you.

Olson, an AFLC lay pastor, is a missionary in Asia with World Mission Prayer League. Amy Andresen's monthly column can be found on page 12.

October 2008 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 46, no. 10

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@afcl.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@afcl.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.

God sometimes moves slowly so that the things most important to Him will become the things most important to us.

— Wayne Schmidt

[Instead of subduing our joy and leaving it outside in the church parking lot, we should be expressing it and making it the accompaniment of everything we do, both in and out of church, just as the Creator Himself infused joy into His whole vast mechanism of creation.

— Sherwood Eliot Wirt
Jesus, Man of Joy]

God loves us not because of who we are and what we have done, but because of who God is.

— Philip Yancey

There is only One Being who can satisfy the last aching abyss of the human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

— Oswald Chambers

fulfillment *where you are at*

By Pastor Jon Wellumson

ONLY, AS THE LORD HAS ASSIGNED TO each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. ... You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.

I Corinthians 7:17-24 (NASB)

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy give us the account of God's people, the Israelites, who were set free from slavery in Egypt and then led through a wilderness area toward a land of their own, promised to them by God. Throughout this account, we read of the many amazing miracles God performed to set the Israelites free from the Egyptians and to sustain them on their journey. His people were given protection, water, food, sandals and clothes that didn't wear out, a visible testimony of God's loving, caring and guiding presence with them, and God's Word — in short — everything they needed.

Reading this account you would think the Israelites were the happiest and most content people who have ever lived. Right? Not so. In fact, it's downright frustrating to read about their discontent and complaints!

What about we who are Christians in the United States today? We live in a time and country that enjoys peace and prosperity like none other in history. The average citizen here has more than many of those well off financially around the world today and throughout history. Naturally we are very content and never complain, do we? On the contrary, our culture urges us to be discontent with what we own, what we look like, what we drive, and who we are so that we might seek fulfillment from the most

recent item for sale.

Sadly, even in the Church, God and religion often become commodities for personal fulfillment. We are sold on what God will do for us and how a worship experience can make us feel about ourselves.

But God is our object of worship, the Lord of our lives and the love of all our being. Our religion should bring us back into a proper relationship with the true and living God. The purpose of the church is not to peddle God as a means of personal fulfillment. As long as we pursue personal fulfillment, the object of our worship will be ourselves.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, urges us to be content





with the life God has given us. We are not to make it our life's pursuit to generate a better life for ourselves — a life we might think of as more fulfilling. God doesn't stop us from receiving an improved position if it is granted to us, but such a position is not to be our life's aim. When God sets us free from sin's tyranny and makes us His by grace, we are to begin serving Him, content in the position we were in when we were called.

Why? Because we were bought with a price (verse 23). What we were purchased from is sin. Sin tells us we can only be fulfilled by serving our own desires and then makes us slaves of those desires. Sin owns us until the moment God purchases

us. Then we belong to the One who rightly rules in our lives — our holy creator God.

At what price were we purchased? Not silver and gold. It was with the life and blood of His only precious Son that God paid for our sins. When by His grace, through His powerful life-giving Word, we find that being restored to Him through Jesus' blood is what truly fulfills us, we no longer look to a temporal change to bring us fulfillment. That which is temporal loses its allure. Then we loving and willingly serving Him in worship, words, deeds and thoughts.

We are warned in verse 23 that since we were bought with a price we are not to be slaves of men, of our own desires, nor of

others who promise us fulfillment through whatever they have to sell. The truth Paul would have us take hold of is well expressed in the third verse of the old hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus."

I take, O cross, thy shadow For my
abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the
sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by, To
know no gain or loss,
My sinful self my only shame, My
glory all the cross.

*Wellumson serves Emmanuel Free
Lutheran, Williston, N.D.*

Teens grapple with who they are, where they fit in and how they should live in the world.

By Pam Olson

As students loaded the van to attend a youth gathering, one of their T-shirts caught my attention. It read, “A Day of Silence.” It looked like a shirt sensitive to a people group. Naively, I asked the student wearing the shirt what was meant by “A Day of Silence.” I didn’t realize that I was opening a surge of emotion to a major issue for students.

My van load of youth spent the next half hour telling me how homosexuals have been silenced in the country — primarily by Christians — and that we need to help them actualize the person they were born to be. My first response was to offer Bible verses to help them understand and clarify the issue, but they weren’t ready to listen. They were still wrestling with a deeper question, “Who am I? What teaching do I fall under: the world’s popular culture or a biblical worldview? Who do I listen to?”

“Who am I?” is a question students ask themselves as they mature and strive to be independent of their parents. Teens grapple with wondering who they are, where they fit in and how they should live in the world. As a youth worker, I constantly see students struggle with their identity. In the midst of these questions comes a culture that throws in confusion and deception through various media. My role as youth worker is to help direct students to the answers, to the source of truth found in the Bible.

As I saw a growing number of church students start to claim they were bisexual or homosexual, and some starting to experiment with these types of relationships, it was apparent they needed intervention. To offer more expertise, I called on a recovering homosexual Christian counselor through Outpost Ministries.

The youth room was packed the evening he came to speak with a captivated audience of students and their friends. Before the session began, our young people were asked to write down any questions they had about the homosexual lifestyle. This provided a means for the students to ask candid questions, free from the risk of judgmental glances or being laughed at. It allowed for open dialogue and a way to bring understanding to the deeper question, “Who Am I?” The questions were handed over to the Outpost counselor to look over before he spoke with the students.

As the speaker began, he explained that he did not come to bash those living in a homosexual lifestyle. He acknowledged that it is a painful place for anyone living outside the perimeters of God’s law, and that rejection and hatred are counter-productive and sinful. This set a tone of love, understanding and compassion in the room.

The speaker shared his own life story, his own time of questioning, “Who am I?” While growing up, people teased him or made hurtful remarks about his behavior or appearance, implying he was gay. After hearing it long enough, he thought he was *born that way* and sought ways to fit in to this discovered identity. Dysfunctional relationships with those around him pushed him further into unhealthy relationships. It was in his depravity that he recognized that the fallen world had distorted relationships and intimacy. It was in his brokenness that he found the answer to the only One who could bring wholeness to his life, the One lover of his soul, Jesus Christ.

The students then heard the poignant, irrefutable point he made — human beings are created to have relationships. We are not born homosexual, contrary to what the

homosexual activists have distorted studies to make us believe. In fact, it’s not about sex at all. Instead, we are born with a desire for intimacy: intimacy with parents, friends and ultimately with the Lord, our Creator.

In that moment I could see light bulbs turning on in the minds of the students listening to his story. They finally found an answer to “Who am I?” They recognized their deep desire for intimacy. They acknowledged the way the world had twisted their perception of intimacy, relationships and sexuality. They recognized their need for healthy relationships as God intended. Some acknowledged that sexually or relationally they were broken and needed to find healing and restoration through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Who would have ever thought that a T-shirt would have opened the door to minister to young people in our group? By asking a question, I was able to understand more of the struggle students face every day within themselves. By being exposed to a biblical worldview on the homosexual issue, students were able to find some answers to a deep life question. Ultimately, that question needs to be answered by the One who made us.

Genesis 1:27, 31 says, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female ... and He said it was good.” The emptiness that comes into our hearts will only be filled with an identity found in the Lord and a relationship with Him. I Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.” So go ahead, read more T-shirts. Who knows where it might lead!

Olson is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.



WHO
OAM I?



It seems to me that our relationships tell us who we are. We define ourselves by them. As do others — or sometimes, they define us by the lack of them. You cannot watch a movie, read a book or chat with a friend and not be exposed to someone's opinion on relationships. The overriding consensus seems to be that we should not be alone.

I am a single Christian. Single is not a disease that needs a cure, as some people seem to think. It is simply one of many adjectives that describe me. The world has a lot to say about relationships, especially if you are single. So do many dating or married Christians, who unwittingly convey through words or actions that if you are a Christian and single, you have not realized your full potential yet. This can be such a discouragement to singles in the body of Christ.

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly” (Romans 12:4-6a).

Being single is not a condition, nor is being married. Both are a commitment, and we all share the same condition: sinful fallen man. Recently I discussed this “single” scenario with my siblings. For the first time our conversation became more than venting our frustration regarding a viewpoint that appears to celebrate being in a relationship more than not being in one.

Through our discussion, the Lord began to reveal to us that whether we are single, married and struggling to start a family, on the brink of a divorce, or a careworn single parent — at times we all share the innate frustration of feeling we are entirely alone.

There are times in our lives when this loneliness is felt more keenly. These periods are not necessarily contingent on social and familial relationships or the lack of them. When the children of God lose sight of the one relationship that matters most, the one with our Savior, we begin to feel our aloneness. This loneliness is accentuated by our fallen state.

Whenever I read the psalms of David, I marvel. I do not have to wonder how he is feeling about his relationship with his Lord. He praises fluently or cries out in bold anguish. His impassioned pleas appear to fall on deaf ears while he laments his circumstances repeatedly with a fervor that almost

seems to offend. Yet in the next verse he can revert to unabashed, effervescent tribute!

What the Lord desires from us is communion. Communion that is unashamed and unafraid. King David pursued this kind of communal relationship with the Lord throughout his life. Yet even the man after God's own heart struggled with the act of putting his relationship with his Lord first.

Every time I read a psalm of David, I again admire and appreciate his simple, childlike trust. This trust allows him to express himself without reservation. Whatever his circumstance, whether dire or joyful, his trust reveals that he knows the source of his contentment.

Any relationship issue is really one about contentment. Can I be content where I am? Can I be content with what the Lord has given me? Or do I grumble about what I still do not have? Sulk about what I had to give up? Do I begin to orchestrate circumstances to provide what it is I think I need?

Contentment

Apart from Christ we are truly alone. Even those of us who are born again experience this loneliness, not because Christ has left us but because we have left Him — in our hearts and by our actions.

Maybe our day gets busy and we neglect our personal devotions, thinking that tomorrow we will have more time. Maybe we turn aside to do “good” things, letting our works become an effort at righteousness. Maybe we shun the simple resting at His feet like Mary, thinking that later we will have more time. We have made tomorrow our apology and later a justifiable excuse for someday.

Isaiah 30:15 describes very well what God considers contentment. “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel says: In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.”

In the body of Christ we all serve a purpose. Let us build up our fellow believers, encouraging and supporting them in the role the Lord has called them to fulfill. I urge you to pursue with diligence the relationship that matters the most.

Believer, make someday, today!

Mellgren is a member of the Trinity/Mt. Carmel Parish in McIntosh, Minn.

There's one
relationship
that matters
the most.

By Alison Mellgren

Have you ever been asked to do something at church that has become a passion, a calling? That is what happened to me 15 years ago when a former pastor asked me to check out a new men's ministry in Colorado. This was the beginning days of Promise Keepers.

I have been involved in men's ministry ever since, serving as an ambassador for Promise Keepers, and have been asked to serve as a local team leader for Man in the Mirror ministries (a men's leadership organization), along with the most important ministry to me, serving on the leadership team of our men's ministry in our congregation.

If you are wondering about the need for a viable men's ministry, check out the following quote from Man in Mirror from the

book, *No Man Left Behind*, "... men in the church face the same challenges and frustrations as men outside of the church. For example, for every ten men in the church, nine will have children who will leave the church; eight will not find their jobs satisfying; six will pay the monthly minimum on their credit card bills; five will have a major problem with pornography; four will get divorced; [and] only one will have a biblical worldview. All ten will struggle to balance work and family."

If this doesn't show the great need of the men of our churches I have been wasting a lot of time these last 15 years.

There are five different groups of men in all of our churches, according to Man in the Mirror: Men who need Christ, cultural Christians, men on the fringes, biblical Christians, and leaders. Each group must be

approached from different points of view. You can't expect a man who doesn't know the Lord to sit through a two-day, in-depth Bible study. He needs fellowship with a short devotional time. At the same time we must offer ministry with some strength for the believer. It does create problems to fulfill the needs of all the men of the church.

Our pastors are so busy with many other responsibilities that strong lay leadership is often needed in many areas of ministry — including ministry to men. "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) is what is called for. That cord is made of strong support from the pastor, a primary leader, and a team of leaders to support him.

Abiding Savior's men's ministry (Band of Brothers) has a team of five lay leaders ranging in age from mid-30s to mid-60s.



We have been together for more than two years, trying to meet on a regular schedule as much as possible weekly for prayer, planning and fellowship. To meet this often and put the time into it, we must be called to the ministry and, if married, have wives who are as dedicated to our goals as we are.

Our theme verse for our men's ministry is Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another." Our goals can be summed up in three words: fellowship, leadership, and discipleship. Training the men to be true disciples of God is the first and foremost job of the leadership team. We want to touch all the men of our church.

For us, anything that a man does in the church is part of the ministry. This could be changing diapers in the nursery, serving coffee during fellowship hour, teaching Sunday school, attending or leading a men's Bible study, or singing in a men's group. Yes, we still have a Saturday morning breakfast and we have men's Bible study, but to fulfill the needs of the men we must be ready to do much more.

The leadership team doesn't take ownership of every event or project. For example, we have a group of guys who like to golf. They have their own leader who lines up tee times and plans events. Another group of younger guys like to shoot paintball. They do their own thing, also. As leaders, we are available to help in any way we can. The next level of leadership takes over for special projects. We have a number of weekly men's Bible studies, each with their own leader. These groups have anywhere from three to ten men who meet for breakfast or after supper for fellowship and Bible study. They also hold each other accountable for their actions.

Pastor Kirk Flaa recently challenged us to become big brothers to some of the teenagers in our congregation. We have a number who do not have dads in their homes. He wants us to do man things: take them hunting, fishing, show them how to change the oil on a car.

I have a young friend I know from the school where I work who was always in trouble. He is now living with his grandmother, who is a member of our church. We have gone fishing together and just became good friends. He knows that I am available any time he needs a man to talk to. He is now in confirmation and is back in regular school. I have gained a lot from this friend-

ship. Besides, I get a hug whenever we see each other.

Not everything we tried has met with success, but we have learned what works and what doesn't. Numbers of men at an event is not the measure of success. If one man is helped or turns to the Lord, then we have been successful.

I personally have grown in the Lord because of the studies we have done. I also have been greatly rewarded through the fellowship of the groups of which I am a part.

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



wisdom

Wisdom is the topic of study this year during Bible class for grades 5 through 7 at our small Christian school. We've been learning that wisdom begins with trusting in Christ as our Savior. He is wisdom personified. Cherie Noel, in her study of wisdom in Proverbs, tells us that wisdom prepares for the future (30:24-25), seeks salvation from hell (15:24), and is obedient (28:7). Wisdom wins souls (11:30), builds security for the future (30:26) and departs from evil (22:3). Wisdom also fears the Lord (15:33) and is peaceable (James 3:17). God gives wisdom to all who ask; it doesn't matter your age or education. We learned that firsthand from our daughter.

Right from the start my husband, Marlin, and I knew that this summer camp would be great for Elizabeth, our 11-year-old daughter. We had both read the information over separately and had come to the same conclusion. Money from our tax refund would be used to fund this expensive, yet valuable learning experience that would involve studying medicine, the human body, as well as leadership training. These are areas Elizabeth is interested in learning more about.

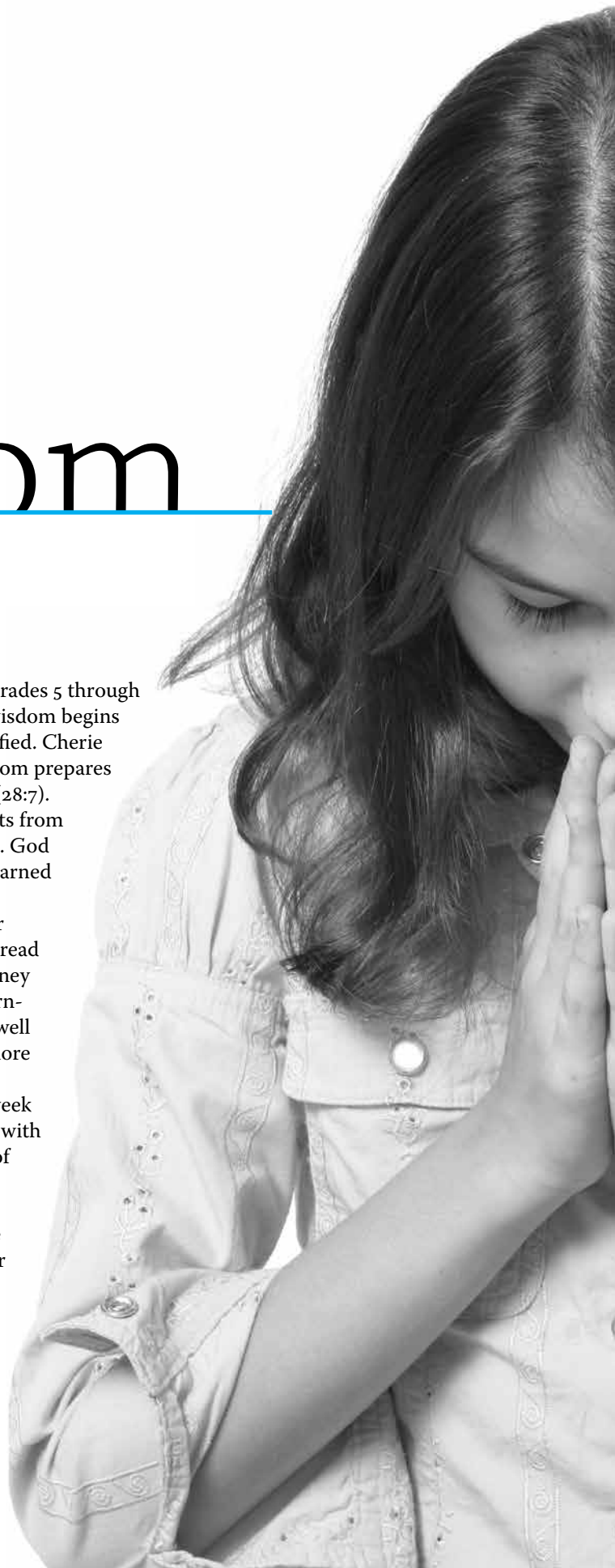
As the children and I drove to take her to camp, we talked about the week ahead. I told Elizabeth that she may have an opportunity to share her faith with someone. Two nights later I got a phone call from her telling me that one of her roommates had prayed to accept Christ.

"Mom, is there anything else I should tell her?" she asked.

I quietly said, "No, Elizabeth, I know God will continue to give you the words to say as He has already. Maybe just reassure her that God will never leave her and will always be with her."

Looking back, I maybe should have said more to her, but I had no idea what else to add. I told her how much I loved her and we hung up.

Elizabeth didn't want me to tell anyone in church about what happened at camp. It was a very private thing to her. Just recently she has expressed a willingness to share the details of the whole event. Here are her words:



By Amy Andresen

beyond measure

when your true self acts in obedience

THIS SUMMER I WENT TO DEKALB, ILL., FOR A NATIONAL YOUNG SCHOLARS PROGRAM. It was a program for kids in third through fifth grade. I couldn't wait until I got there. I wanted to make as many friends as possible. When I got the key to my room I set up all of the stuff I had brought. Then I went downstairs with my mom and finally said goodbye. I went into a room where we got to play different types of board games and crafts. Then we had a meeting and went to our rooms to get acquainted with our roommates.

Four people stayed in two adjoining dorm rooms. I was in a room with a girl named Elizabeth. The room directly beside us housed two girls whose names are Ebonee and Elesia. We visited with each other for about an hour and then went off to our classes. The next day we saw each other at lunch and sat down to eat together. I bowed my head and prayed and thanked God for the food.

Later that evening Ebonee asked me why I prayed at lunch. I told her all about how Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins. I told her the Ten Commandments and about Adam and Eve. Then my other roommate said that there was actually a different girl before Eve whose name was Lithia. She said that Lithia had gotten mad at Adam and called out God's name. The angels then took her to heaven. I wanted to say, "Yeah, sure, right, whatever," but that would have been rude.

She also told us about global warming and that the Earth was going to flood. I got my Bible out and read in Genesis about the flood and when God promised to never flood the Earth again. She mentioned that everyone evolved from monkeys ... monkeys without fur. Then I read in Genesis about how God made the whole Earth and made all the animals of the world and that we are the only living things with spirits. I mentioned that the Earth is about 6,000 years old as God shows us in the Bible through the genealogy.

I told them about something I had learned in Bible school this summer: that a man put a bottle under a stalagmite and it took just ten years for a stalagmite to form over the bottle. Also, a bag of flour was buried underground and it fossilized in just three weeks.

Ebonee, when she heard all this, was amazed and wanted to ask Jesus Christ into her life because she didn't want to go to hell and she wanted to know Jesus Christ more. We prayed together and I told her what she could say to ask Jesus into her life. She also asked for my Bible the last night that we stayed at the campus. I really missed her when we left.

As I listened to my daughter tell this story, I saw the wisdom shown in this young girl. She prayed before her meal out of fear of the Lord. She didn't worry about how she looked doing it or what others thought. She did it out of obedience. She also acted to win souls, had prepared for the future by knowing her Bible, and was peaceable.

We are warned in Proverbs 1:24-33 what will happen to those who reject God and His wisdom. "I will laugh at your calamity, mock when dread comes ... then they will call on me, but I will not answer ... they shall eat of the fruit of their own way ... but he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil." Let's wise up and follow the ways of God. We are promised to receive great blessings.

Andresen is a member of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Madison, S.D.



The long term

By Pastor Craig Johnson, editor

Seven men sitting around a dining room table doesn't make for great pictures. Spending time with a small group, reading the Bible and praying together usually isn't the basis for an exciting story for a missionary newsletter. But that is the foundation for missionary work which in the long term leads to lasting positive results.

Missionary Nate Jore meets with a group of Ugandan pastors most every Saturday. They gather around the Jores' dining room table. Some of the pastors live in Jinja where the Jores live. Others come from surrounding villages and travel hours by bicycle and public transport.

One Saturday in May they spent time studying the Bible and praying together. Each of them talked about recent teaching opportunities they had. They discussed how it had gone and shared ideas with each other on what they could do better. I appreciated their open and honest discussion with each other. They are trying to learn and become effective servants of Christ. That is going to happen as they work and seek Christ together.

Ben Jore and Jesse Long are beginning their third school year as teachers at the Waama Bible College in Mbulu, Tanzania. They, like the Jores in Uganda, are looking at the long-term effects of their ministry.

Congregations from area villages send students to Waama to receive biblical train-

ing and equip them to provide leadership and service to the church. The heart of Jesse and Ben's ministry is to train these future leaders. The fruit of that kind of ministry isn't always immediately apparent. Like other teachers, Ben and Jesse wonder at times if their students are grasping what is being taught. Clear understanding and life change often doesn't come right away. But they continue on, trusting that God's Word will not return empty but accomplish what the Lord desires and achieve the purpose for which He has sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

On weekends Jesse and Ben travel to villages and show the Jesus film. Most of the time they travel to the home village of one of their students. These weekends serve as both a time of evangelistic outreach and also additional training. The student comes along and gets to visit family. He also gets to be involved in the outreach event and receive some hands-on training. Ben and Jesse encourage the students and the leaders of the local congregations to take the lead in welcoming people to the film and giving an invitation at the end of the movie.

Robert Morrison was the first Protestant missionary to China. He served there from 1807 until his death in 1834. During 27 years of service he baptized 10 Chinese believers. The work was hard and he didn't see a whole lot of good from it.

Morrison translated the whole Bible into the Chinese language and helped

make plans for a wide distribution of the Scriptures. This laid the foundation for future missionary work that saw thousands, and now millions of people come to Christ throughout China. While his work didn't produce impressive results in the short term it most certainly has in the long term.

When I was in Africa I had the chance to get on the Internet. I've grown accustomed to a high-speed connection in the U.S. The connection in Africa often seemed so slow in comparison. As I stared at the computer screen and waited, I was tempted to give up. Like many of us spoiled Westerners, I wanted the Web pages to load right now.

We get tempted to have that same kind of attitude toward mission work. We want to see results right now. Some of the most important mission work, however, doesn't lend itself to immediate, visible results. We who are senders and supporters of missionaries must take care that we do not get caught up in the "show me something now" mindset of our culture. We pray that our missionaries, and we ourselves, will continue to have a long-term perspective toward mission work. The Bible says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). The proper time may not be tomorrow. It may not even be in our lifetime. But by God's grace, one day the harvest will come.



Harvest work

WILL YOU JOIN THE MINISTRY?

BY PASTOR JONATHAN ABEL

“Then said he to his disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest’”

~Matthew 9:37-38

The good thing about a plentiful harvest is that there always is a lot of work to do. The bad thing about having only a few workers is that there always is a lot of work to do.

I have been very busy these last years, but recently my work load has greatly increased. I teach two nights a week at our seminary in Brazil, so I travel from our home in Maringá to Campo Mourão each week and spend two or three days there studying, teaching and participating in other ministry efforts in that city.

Along with these responsibilities, I am the president of the field conference, meaning I represent the AFLC Brazil in all legal areas. I end up going to every board meeting that involves some participation of the AFLC mission: school staff meetings, school board meetings, the Brazilian Association Board meetings, and lately I have been sitting in on the board meetings of the Miriam Infant Home as they have gone through a total board change. In all of this we have tried to be there to encourage the nationals as they face major changes.

God has been good and we have seen Him blessing the ministries against all odds. Last year 39 kids went through the orphanage; this year 37 children came through before July. Two girls (sisters aged 13 and 11) came to the orphanage as drug addicts. The judge had taken them away from their alcoholic mother. Today the girls are drug free and totally changed. Another boy, George (15), has finally been released for adoption. Since he is at what is considered a non-adoptable age, we are teaching him to do various things around the campus so that he may have a better future.

A recent experience was extremely interesting for me. A

former graduate of our seminary and pastor of ours, Pastor Clério, asked if I could translate for an evangelist from the U.S. with Christ for the Nations. After some consideration I rearranged my church schedule and joined Dr. John Bos' team. We spent a day with Pastor Clério in the city of Astorga, some 60 miles from Maringá, sharing with about 400 students. Then we went to Maringá and had meetings Friday and Saturday. I had lunch with the Minister of Health, a senator and president of one of the largest universities in our city and also connected with the superintendent of the airport who is a counselor of the mayor and directs music at the Presbyterian church.

In spite of all these activities, and sharing the gospel with more than 1,000 students, I still was able to spend real quality time with some men of our church whom I have been discipling. Things at the Maringá church are improving. We are coming closer to purchasing a property, and also we are seeing growth in the people whom we are discipling.

When Jesus talked about the harvest, He started out by looking at the multitudes and had compassion for them. The multitudes of individuals needing the love of Jesus are what ministry is all about. It is not about programs, organizations or activities. It is about lost souls who need Jesus. We do what we can with what we have, to the best of our abilities, and pray that others will come to help. Would you join the harvest? I hope that in your place and in your way you would.

Abel serves as an AFLC missionary in Maringá, Brazil.

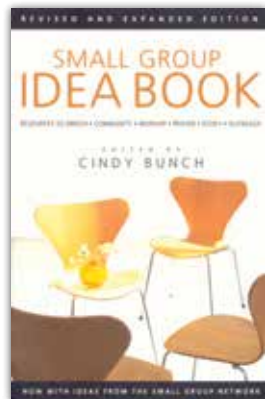
Resources

For more information on these resources, contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or e-mail parished@aflc.org.



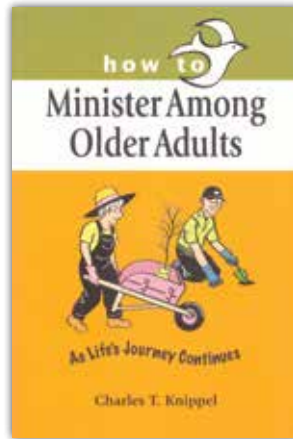
Best Small-Group Ideas

101 articles on stimulating growth in small groups gleaned from the pages of *Discipleship Journal*. Whether you're new to small groups or have been leading them for years, you can discover creative ideas for outreach, serving, prayer, Bible study, and other small-group activities. \$12



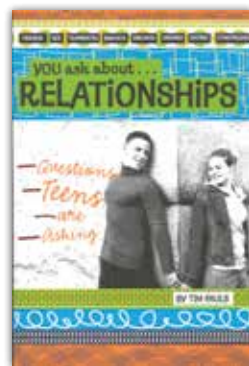
Small Group Idea Book

Hundreds of activities tested in the field and drawn from the front lines of small group ministry to help your group grow closer to one another as you draw near to God together. These creative ideas can enhance the components of healthy group life: community, worship, prayer, study, and outreach. \$13



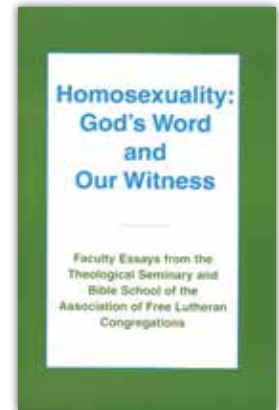
How to Minister Among Older Adults: As Life's Journey Continues

America is in the midst of a demographic revolution. The old cone-shaped age chart with many younger people and fewer older people is obsolete and has now been replaced by a column-shaped chart. The fastest-growing demographic group is adults older than 65. This book offers practical procedures, Bible studies, and workshop outlines to revitalize and help mobilize ministry for older adults. \$9.95



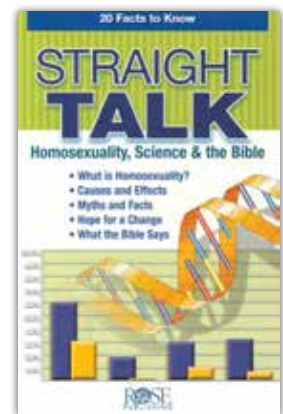
You Ask About ... Relationships

A collection of questions and answers about topics concerning young people today such as dating, sex, enemies, coworkers, parents, friends, siblings, and teammates. Each answer deals with the subject honestly and is rooted in God's Word. \$9



Homosexuality: God's Word and Our Witness

This collection of essays prepared by faculty of AFLC schools discusses Old and New Testament passages that deal with homosexuality, how the Church has viewed it in the past, the distinction between homosexual orientation and behavior, and help for those struggling with homosexuality. \$2



Straight Talk: Homosexuality, Science & the Bible

Fold-out pamphlet briefly defines homosexuality and explains causes and effects, myths and facts, hope for change, and what the Bible says. \$3.95

Participation

BY GERI GRAHAM



*What happens when
a committee is
dedicated to God's work
and builds up and
supports its members.*

I remember the day my husband Kenn was voted to be on the Home Missions Committee (HMC). We were fairly new at attending the AFLC conference when this happened and I wondered if he knew what he was getting into. We are from California, and I thought the distance to Minneapolis would keep him from participating.

I soon discovered my husband looked forward to the HMC meetings. The committee was made up of a group of godly men with a director who has a great vision for God's mission.

Kenn was impressed with each member's commitment to doing God's work and supporting and building up the Home Mission churches and pastors. Many times he would come home and tell me how humbled he was to be involved with such men who loved the Lord and made every effort to do their part to further God's kingdom.

I recall one weekend when we traveled to a neighboring state to support one of the members of the HMC who was going through a rough time as the president of his congregation. An important congregational meeting was being held and we were there to support him during a very emotional and difficult meeting. The love and support the members of the HMC have for one another is overwhelming. I don't know what goes on in their meetings, but with the hours spent on their conference calls and the length of their meetings, there has to be some mighty tough decisions going on. I've never seen any hostility or angry men come out of these meetings, unlike the committees I've experienced in my career. Of course, God wasn't in control at my meetings.

The HMC is a praying committee and I see it all the time. I have watched my husband stop and pray for someone on the phone or sit silently as he listened to someone pray for him. The Knee-mail, a weekly e-mail prayer update distributed by the Home Mission department, has been a blessing to me and I'm sure for others. I'm so thankful I can do my part to pray for the needs of our Home Mission congregations.

Occasionally the wives have been invited to join their husbands when they have retreats or anytime the HMC gets together; what a blessing to be included in their prayer and devotion time. Now I can understand how my husband feels when he comes home after spending time with the HMC. Awesome! Thanks be to God.

"Therefore encourage one another, and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Graham and her husband are members of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

BY KAREN HART



Macy, Edlund installed at Beltrami as licensed pastors

Both will also serve part-time at East March River congregation

Anders Macy and Donovan Edlund (center left and right) were installed as licensed pastors Aug. 10 at Resurrection Free Lutheran, Beltrami, Minn. Pastor Michael Brandt (left), vice president of the AFLC, led the installation service and also spoke at the morning worship service. Also pictured is Pastor Dale Finstrom, who serves Resurrection Free Lutheran. Both Macy and Edlund have been active youth leaders at Beltrami. They recently were approved as licensed pastors by the AFLC's Coordinating Committee and have been called to serve Resurrection Free Lutheran and part-time at East Marsh River Free Lutheran, rural Halstad, Minn.

People and places

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee accepted resolutions of affiliation from two congregations wishing to join the AFLC.

Trinity Bethany Lutheran, Harvey, N.D., is served by Pastor Fred Schmidt.

Trinity Lutheran, Mott, N.D., is served by AFLC Pastor John Amundson, who also serves Immanuel Lutheran, New Leipzig, N.D.

Pastor Andy Coyle was installed Sept. 7 at St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, Iowa, and Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiated at the service.

Pastor Tom Olson was installed Sept. 14 at St. John's Lutheran, Newark, Ohio. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiated at the service.

Jerry Nelson, former director of music for AFLC Schools, has accepted a position as director of youth ministries at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. He began his new position Aug. 22.

Pastor Steve Mundfrom has accepted a letter of call to Grace Free Lutheran and Zion Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D. He leaves his position at Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D.

Illinois district hosts first summer Bible camp



The Illinois District of the AFLC had its first district Bible camp July 28-31 at Cedar Lake Bible Conference Center, Cedar Lake, Ind. It was a great success with more than 100 campers of all ages representing 11 different AFLC Illinois district congregations attending. The theme was "Created by Him and For Him" from Colossians 1. The morning speaker was Dave Johnson, who provided a wide range of scientific evidences supporting a faith in the Bible's description of creation (see picture at right), along with Pastor Dana Coyle, the evening speaker, who challenged campers to consider how Christians should live as those created by and for God.

The Illinois District Bible Camp will again return to Cedar Lake Aug. 3-6, 2009, with hopes of having an even greater number of AFLC churches participating.



Helmar Lutheran group travels to Bolivia

Short-term trip meant to support missionaries and learn about work



Members of the group included (back row, from left) John Talley, Peter Slayton, John Swenson and Pastor Dennis Norby; (front row, from left) Geri Anderson, Deena Schroeder, Ellie Swenson and Stacy Swenson. Pictured above is the infamous Death Road, the world's most dangerous road, which links La Paz to remote villages. Each year, 200-300 people die when their vehicles fall down the cliffs.

Eight members from Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., traveled June 19-29 to Bolivia to visit missionaries supported by their congregation, Phil and Sara Kittleson and John and Carmina Donhowe. During the short-term mission trip, the group visited a Christian school in Caranavi, where the missionaries work, as well as other villages.

"The trip was packed with a lot of travel and we were able to see many areas of Bolivia; from the more remote and impoverished to the large city of La Paz with some of the wealthier people," said Pastor Dennis Norby.

The group flew to La Paz and spent time in several villages,

including Chimate, Achiquiri, Santa Rosa, and Conzata. In each village, the group hosted a vbs-type program with Bible stories, singing and a craft. While some led the program, others were involved in a small work project in the village.

"For instance, in one place we helped in setting up a water filter system for the school. In other places we helped with painting in churches and at the school in Caranavi," said Norby. "Helmar has had connections with the work in Bolivia for many years (30+) and this was a great time for some who had heard about the country and the people for many years to get to experience things first-hand."



Classes began Sept. 3 on the campus of the AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn. Pictured at left are students of AFLTS. Above are four of the 135 students registered for AFLBS (from left) Rachel Johnson, Hannah Dyrud, Jon Langness and Daniel Hurner. Four students have registered for the Ministry Training Institute.

August memorials

AFLBS Peder Moe, Audrey Moan	Gene Childs
AFLT Dorryce Brintnell, Vernon Buck, Lil Sundby, Peder Moe	Vision Peder Moe, Vernon Buck
Evangelism Annie Holen	WMF Allan Lerud, JoAnne Grubb, Caroline Rumpza, Edna Peterson, Berniece Fish, Dorothy Engelen, Conrad Rufstad, Orel Herfindahl, Agnes Heimdal
FLAPS Lester Mickelsen	World Missions Elva Axelson, Annie Ramberg, Myrtle Johnson, Ralph Stone
General Fund Dorryce Brintnell	... in honor of
Parish Education Lillie Ann Tobin	World Missions Quam/Hafvenstein wedding
Home Missions Dorryce Brintnell, Arnold Hermunslie, Hattie Sande,	

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Aug. 31, 2008

FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$360,331	19,331	\$230,055	64
Evangelism	113,084	7,527	60,807	54
Youth Ministries	71,249	19,139	77,204	108
Parish Education	116,771	6,391	66,934	57
Seminary	220,252	10,380	117,092	53
Bible School	346,706	58,775	259,616	75
Home Missions	332,985	20,533	182,362	55
World Missions	288,948	14,546	193,328	67
Personal Support	457,495	32,532	307,122	67
TOTALS	\$2,307,821	\$189,152	\$1,494,520	65
TOTALS 2007	\$2,220,688	\$194,205	\$1,476,991	67
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.				

ARC hosts work weekend, special Christmas presentation

The Association Retreat Center's Family Work & Fellowship Weekend is October 24-26. Saturday work projects will include preparing the camp grounds for the winter season, putting on new roofing, and other projects to be determined by need, numbers and weather. As well as helping with projects there will be time to just relax and enjoy the ARC.

The ARC will also host a special performance this Christmas season with a presentation of *The Carol*, a musical adaptation of Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*. Performances will be held December 5-7 and 12-14. All performances are free. The ARC will host a benefit matinee dinner theater performance along with a silent auc-

tion on Dec. 6 as an annual fund-raiser. Reservations are required for this event. If you have items that you would like to donate for the silent auction (new items, collectibles, antiques or crafts) please call 1-800-294-2877. For updates on these events, visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc-aflc.org. Additional information on *The Carol* is available at www.thecarol.org.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

The Lutheran Ambassador
Publication No. 588-620, Filed 9-4-08
Issued monthly. Twelve issues annually.
Annual subscription price \$18.00
Mailing address of Office of Publication and headquarters of General Business Office:
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.
Publisher: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
Editor: Craig Johnson, 575 34th St., Astoria, OR 97103
Managing Editor: Ruth Gunderson, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441
Owner: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.
Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None.
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.
Publication Name: The Lutheran Ambassador.

Issue date for circulation data: September 2008
Total number of copies (net press run):
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3827
Copies September 2008 issue: 3564 Paid and/or requested circulation:
Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3527
Copies September 2008 issue: 3264
Through counter sales:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100
Copies September 2008 issue: 100
Total paid and/or requested circulation:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3627
Copies September 2008 issue: 3364
Free distribution by mail:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100
Copies September 2008 issue: 100
Free distribution outside the mail:
Avg. copies each issue during past year:

100
Copies September 2008 issue: 100
Total free distribution:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100
Copies September 2008 issue: 150
Total distribution:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3727
Copies September 2008 issue: 3464
Copies not distributed:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 100
Copies September 2008 issue: 100
Total:
Avg. copies each issue during past year: 3827
Copies September 2008 issue: 3564
Percent paid and/or requested circulation, average and September 2008 issue: 99%
Publication is required and will be printed in the October 2008 issue of the Lutheran Ambassador.
/s/ Ellis L. Bloomfield, Printer

Knowing where you're going

Sometimes on youth trips students are more interested in who's going than where they're going. Even if the destination sounds like a fun place, some won't be interested in the trip unless some of their friends are going, also. On other occasions, some don't seem to care a whole lot where they are headed. It might sound like a boring place but they'll ride along, as long as their friends are going, too.



Pastor Craig Johnson

A lot of us at times make decisions about what we do on the basis of who is going to be where. When I was in college I told my roommate I was going to the opera that the school's symphony was putting on that evening. He asked me, "What's her name?" He knew I had not all of a sudden become an opera lover. I was going because of a person. She played violin.

Sometimes people make the decision about what church to be a part of or what church body to belong to on the basis of who else belongs to it, rather than thinking about where it is going. They aren't all that sure about the group's vision or beliefs. They just know they like the people who are in the group. Making decisions in that manner can lead a person down a dangerous path.

In our congregations we want to live with an attitude of joy and hope that attracts others. We want to show love that draws people in. It is a good thing when people look at their local congregation as

the place where their best friends are and it is a group they want to be a part of. It is great if they enjoy being with others in the congregation. But it is also important they know where the congregation is going.

We are not to invite people to come along on a "mystery tour." We should not hide what we believe. We ought to be upfront about our values, our priorities and goals. As an example, I believe something is wrong if people are in our congregations for a long period of time and then are shocked to find out we have a Lutheran understanding of the sacraments. Regular sharing of our beliefs and our vision is important.

That same type of sharing and teaching is important for our Association. It's possible some might join our group without being clear on where we are going. They are more focused on who we are, or maybe who we are not. They like that we do things differently than the group they belonged to in the past. They appreciate and agree with our belief that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God without error.

That is part of where we are going, but another important aspect of where we are headed is toward building free and living Lutheran congregations. Some people maybe didn't mind a system with a bishop who exerted authority over congregations. They just didn't like the bishop.

We don't have an authoritative bishop in the AFLC. We believe "the congrega-

tion directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself" (Fundamental Principle 5). We emphasize the local congregation. We cherish its freedom. Some might say we get a little extreme in protecting its freedom. But we believe "according to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom on earth" (Fundamental Principle 5). We believe congregational

They aren't all that sure about the group's vision or beliefs. They just know they like the people who are in the group. Making decisions in that manner can lead a person down a dangerous path.

freedom is the best way to encourage spiritual life. That is where we are headed. People need to know that right upfront.

It is a joy and a privilege when people join us in the journey, both in our local congregations and as an Association. But we want to follow the example of Jesus, who let the disciples know where He was headed. He was going to the cross (Matthew 16:21).

We let people know we are following the crucified and risen One as we build up free and living Lutheran congregations that honor Jesus.

association retreat center

BY BOB AND CAROL DIETSCHKE

Hungry for God

Recently we heard a sermon on “The Good Samaritan” from Luke 10:25-37. One of the points emphasized the thought, “Who is your neighbor?” The Samaritan was not concerned about the identity of the man who was injured. Nor did he consider it an inconvenience to stop and help him. Nor did he count the financial cost to himself. His was a compassionate love that transcended cultural barriers, transcended financial barriers and transcended convenience barriers.

There are so many around us who are half dead. They are alive physically, but dead spiritually and hungry for something to fill a void in their lives. The poem entitled, “We’re Hungry, Lord,” expresses this need so clearly.

We are hungry, Lord,
We are hungry for something, Lord.
We have so much rich food, cake and candy for ourselves,
But we are hungry.
People around us are so stiff and tight and hard to reach,
They make us that way, too.
But, oh Lord, we are hungry for something more.

People we know keep talking about great ideas,
Questions, brilliant questions, and the problem of
God’s existence.

But we’re hungry for You, not ideas, not theories, not
even theology.
We are hungry for You.

We want You to touch us, to reach down inside us and
turn us on.

We want to know somebody who knows You.

There are many people who are willing to counsel us
to death,
But we are hungry for someone who really knows You
and has You,
Someone who can get so close to us that we can see
You there.
We have so many things, but we are hungry for You.

Deep down inside we’re hungry,
Even if we appear to be silly, lazy or unconcerned at
times,
But we are hungry.

We are hungry for Your kind of power, for Your kind
of love.
For Your kind of joy, for Your kind of peace.
Feed us Lord, feed us with Your rich food.

~Anonymous

The focus of the Association Retreat Center’s ministry is to
feed the spiritually hungry. May we also — as men or women,
boys or girls — be willing, regardless of the cost, to become
instruments that God can use for this purpose.

*The Dietsches, who are members of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery,
Wis., have been longtime supporters of the ARC ministry.*