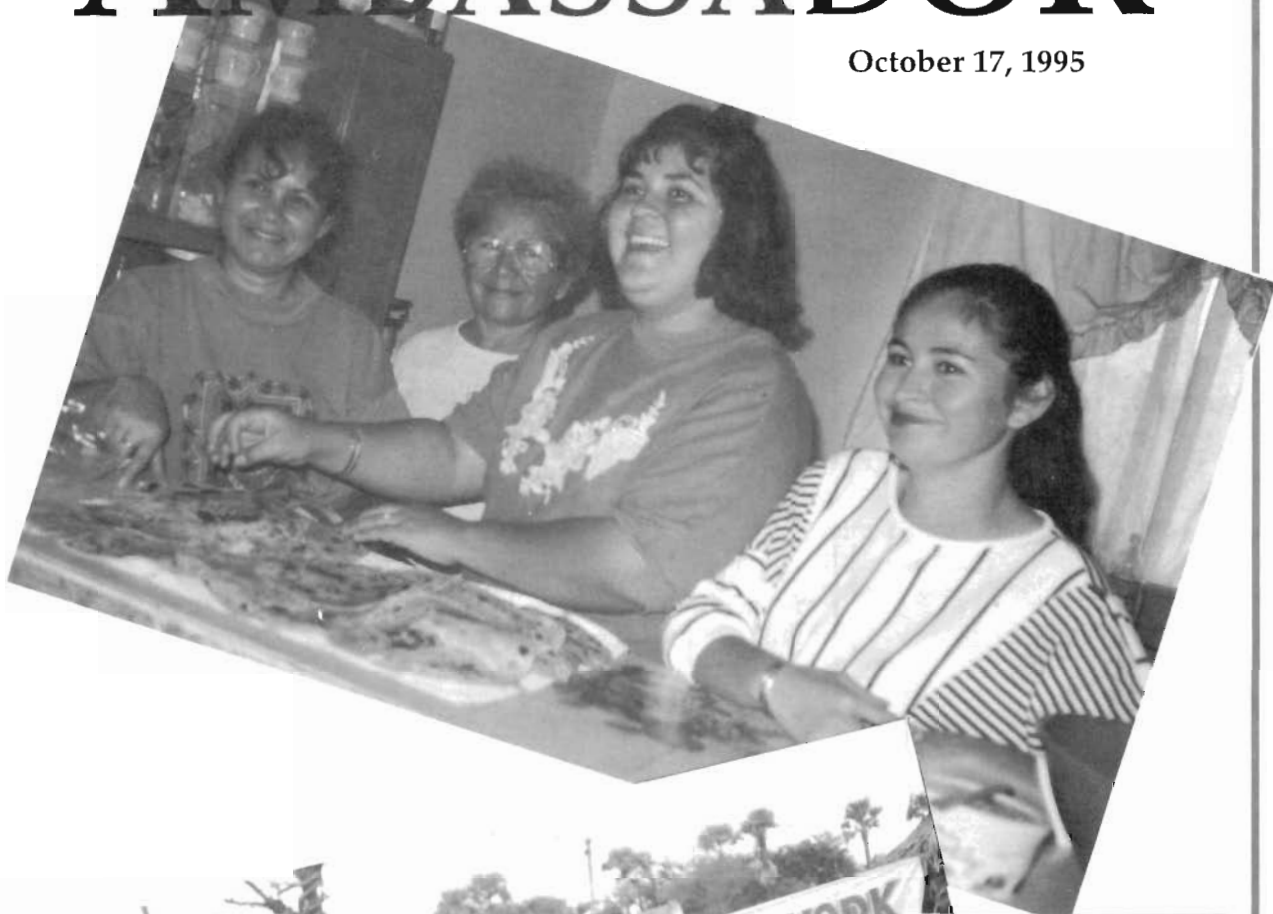


The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

October 17, 1995



A look at
MISSIONS
at home
and abroad

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

A labor of love

Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

— John 15:9

In my first article I promised to let you know about the forthcoming harvest from my apple tree. God was faithful, and I picked bushels of beautiful apples, suitable for cooking and canning applesauce.

I picked the apples and lugged them into the house, set them down and said: "Here you go, honey. Here are some apples for you."

My wife peeled and cored them. Then she sliced and cooked them into a fragrant aroma of cinnamon and sweetness. Then the real work began for her. She poured the bubbling mixture into the sterile mason jars, and put the lids on. Carefully she lowered them into the boiling water in the kettle. Finally she lifted them out and set them on the cooling rack. It was a sweaty, sticky job, and she did it while she watched two babies, two children and a nosy husband who wanted to taste the final product!

I wish you could see the rows of jars on the shelves in the garage — not just applesauce, but apple pie filling, blackberry jam, raspberry jam and pears. They stand there proudly, tall and straight like rows of confederate soldiers on the battlefield. One day my wife let the cat out of the bag when she told me, "I did it because I knew it would make you happy."

I call it a labor of love.

Sometimes prayer is a labor of love! Usually we think of Christ's ministry in terms of His

magnificent miracles, but there is more about His ministry than the obvious. In the gospel of Mark we read this quiet verse in chapter one: "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there."

What is so amazing about this verse is the context, which describes Jesus with a very active ministry. He has just been extremely busy healing the sick and delivering many who were in bondage with demons. I used to think that Jesus prayed so He could be so busy working for God's Kingdom — that prayer was only a means to His ministry. Now I understand that prayer was not just the means to the ministry: it was ministry itself.

In Gethsemane Christ's labor of love was visibly displayed when He prayed, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done," and again, "being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." Shortly after He said, "Amen," Jesus was arrested and crucified. Even from the cross, Christ's last words were prayers.

My friend, do you love Christ's Church? Enough to choose the less-traveled road of prayer? What we need now is not more clever schemes or gimmicks, not more workers in the church, but more quiet saints to take up the labor of love and pray.

—Rev. Joel Lohafer
Triumph Lutheran
Ferndale, Washington

Why send missionaries?

In 1786 a young Baptist pastor by the name of William Carey suggested that a group of ministers he was meeting with consider whether or not Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations was binding on them. His suggestion met with this sharp rebuke: "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to converse with the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you or me."

Carey did not give up his God-given vision and he went on to become known as the "Father of Modern Missions," serving many years himself in India.

As in William Carey's day so today there are objections raised to sending cross-cultural missionaries into all the world. One objection that is often heard is that there is enough mission work to do right here at home. Why send committed Christians off to another country when the need is so great here in America?

Another objection to sending missionaries is the cost. Some say why not keep the money here for our needs, while others say send just the money and support national workers in their own country. This saves travel expenses and their cost of living is often much less than that of an American.

Yet another reason to not send missionaries is that the job of world evangelization is already done. Some argue that through the means of television, radio and literature distribution all have received a gospel witness.

In view of these objections we should stop and consider these questions: Why send missionaries? Is there justification for much of today's missionary effort? Yes, there is!

God's Call

First of all, there is God's clear call: "And He (Jesus) said, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation'" (Mark 16:15). All of the above objections overlook this one clear command of Christ. Our involvement in God's missionary plan is not to be based on our reasoning or on financial considerations but on obedience to God's Word. His call to His Church is clear: go to all the world.

This commission is not fulfilled only by sending out cross-cultural missionaries, but that certainly has been and will continue to be a part of its fulfillment.

Personal Call

There is the personal call to a particular mission field for some. Philip was led very specifically by God to go and witness to an Ethiopian on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26-27). Paul received a clear personal call to go to Macedonia to preach the gospel (Acts 16:6-10). Can God not work



Church construction at Bodduluripadu, India.



A children's class in Celaya, Mexico.

WHY SEND—in that same way today? Should we not recognize the validity of such a personal call to a particular place and not impose our objections? Certainly this is one of the ways God has evangelized parts of the world and continues to do so.

Gladys Aylward went to China early in this century with a personal burden and call to the Chinese people. She went against the objections of friends and family and without the support of any missionary agency; but God met her needs and used her greatly in the saving of many souls and establishing orphanages in that great land.

Needs of the World

"Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look onto the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35). The fields are still white for harvest. The needs are still great in our world. There are yet many who need to hear the name of Jesus for the first time. Missiologists tell us there are literally thousands of people groups that have no consistent gospel witness among them and many without the written Word in their language. The supposed cultured, advanced nations are starving spiritually.

A missionary who grew up in our congregation recently returned with her family from France where they serve. They told of a nation with large empty cathedrals and a people who consider Christianity only as a historical footnote. France is a country of atheists, agnostics and spiritually unconcerned and uninformed people in general. Many know nothing of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

So many other countries are in the same spiritual condition. How can we ask if we should still be sending and supporting missionaries?

Practical Considerations

One of the major waves of missionary thought today is to just support indigenous missions, that is, support Christian workers serving in their homeland. They know the language and the culture and can most effectively communicate the gospel to their own people. The support dollars also go farther this way. This view makes perfect sense and is being carried out in many instances. This, in fact, should be our goal, to help a mission work become self-supporting; nationals evangelizing nationals, nationals training national pastors, etc. Even in this scenario, however, there is a need for cross-cultural missionaries to be involved in the initial work of evangelism, church planting, training of new converts and getting the work off the ground.

How long this takes and the ongoing involvement in a given area is dependent on the situation and the mission philosophy of a given organization. Even if a group's only involvement is financial support of a national/indigenous work, there is a responsibility as good stewards of God's resources for someone to oversee the use of this support and to hold workers accountable. Some groups call this person a missionary surveyor or, in our situation, a mission director. This too is mission work.

Should God's Church still be sending and supporting missionaries to other lands? As long as one soul is lost and we honestly look at God's great commission, the answer must be a resounding "yes!"

Are you actively involved in the great commission? Is your church? Spend time today before the Lord, prayerfully seeking His will regarding your involvement in God's great commission.

*That Thy way may be known
on the earth,*

Thy salvation among all nations.



— Rev. Jeff Swanson
Helmar Lutheran,
member of the AFLC
World Missions Committee
Newark, Illinois

AFLC World Missions



Brazil – Started work in 1966 (30 years) 8 national pastors; 18 national churches; American missionaries – David Abel, Jonathan Abel, Paul Abel, Connely Dyrud and David Nelson.



Mexico – Started work in 1978 (17 years) 4 national pastors; 5 national churches; American missionaries – Daniel Giles and Todd Schierkolk (language study).



India – Started work in 1980 (reaffiliated in 1989) 25 national pastors, 30-plus national churches.

Consistent Surrender

“Common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense; they stand in the relation of the natural and the spiritual,” wrote Oswald Chambers. What sense does it make for one to take only what she can carry in two suitcases and leave everything familiar, only to be submersed in an entirely different culture with a language all its own?

“None,” common sense would dictate. And yet Chambers points out something else: “Faith must be tested, because it can be turned into a personal possession only through conflict.”

For those who have experienced the mission field, foreign or domestic, conflict becomes a daily occurrence. Faith demands a complete and humble surrender to the One who is in control. “He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days” (Psalm 102:23). He has done this for a reason.

How difficult and frustrating life becomes when I play a role other than my own. How peaceful and calm life is when I surrender my will to the Holy Spirit.

Daily we are called to be consistent. Common sense pulls at us for punctuality, precision, attendance, performance, standards, etc. Yet the Holy Spirit calls us to be consistent in only one thing: our abandonment to Him. He asks us to lay down our will at His feet that He might lead us in His will.

“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). Since I have been in Brazil, faith has answered the various trials that common sense fails. The joy and the peace in my heart is unmatched in knowing that He is in control as I lay down the next trial.

— Catherine Torgerson
short-term missionary teacher in Brazil

Expect the unexpected

A look at the life of an AFLC missionary in Brazil



A day in the life of a missionary is filled with the unexpected. Yes, plans are made, appointments kept and routine responsibilities fulfilled; but sandwiched into these are the interruptions — those special opportunities to minister to real people with real needs. Often interruptions become the agenda of the day.

We pray and ask the Lord to direct us for His glory. Sometimes we think we would feel more comfortable falling into a routine and avoiding these surprise happenings. But God has taught us to enjoy the adventures of the unknown as we allow Him to work through us for the building of His kingdom. Following are a few real life “interruptions” given to us. Ask yourself how you would react in a similar situation.

➔ A lay leader from one of our churches drops in for a visit with three drug addicts he is trying to win for Christ. We had been looking forward to our only night free with our family. What would you do?

We invited them to have supper, then Paul shared the gospel with them and they prayed to receive Christ. We realized the life they have had is totally different from their new life in Christ and the temptations will be great. So we invited them to stay at the ARCA (it has been three months now) and be discipled as they seek to restructure their lives. Through daily Bible study and prayer and dialogue, accompanied by hard work, good food and rest, we are praying they will be ready to go back home. *We who are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak and not please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up* (Romans 15:1-2).

➔ A carload of visitors arrive for Sunday morning worship service (relatives of the boys we are trying to help). They hang around after church to visit. Their drive home will take almost two hours. What would you do?

They accepted our invitation to stay

for Sunday dinner and the Lord again multiplied the food. Through our conversation one couple decided to legalize their marriage and be baptized and instructed in the faith. *Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality* (Romans 12:13).

➔ A woman calls for prayer that she might be a blessing in her niece's life who is struggling with physical and spiritual problems — resulting from using a Ouiji board and other demonic practices. What would you do?

I explained the principles of spiritual battle and prayed with her. Later we prayed with other members of the church for her victory in dealing with this problem. *Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (James 5:18).

➔ A young boy comes to ask for counseling in his relationships with members of the church. He has previously stolen from us, lied and made decisions contrary to our advice. What would you do?

We took time to listen and give counsel and pray. *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails* (I Corinthians 13:7).

➔ A couple wants to have their baby baptized. The mother has started coming to church but the father has never shown spiritual interest. What would you do?

Paul invited the father to a men's retreat which he accepted. A few weeks later God gave us the privilege of praying with him and his wife to receive Christ. Another opportunity to witness appeared when we shared about baptism with the family and the sponsors. Now the family comes to church regularly. *And pray for us, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ... making the most of every opportunity* (Colossians 4:3,5).

➔ There is a request to give classes in the public schools about drug use, its affects, and how to avoid it. What would you do?

We gathered information and films and agreed to do it. *Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins* (James 5:20).

➔ A drunkard is shot and killed; leaving a wife and five small children homeless and without security. What would you do?

Paul organized the people of the town to donate materials and help build a home. We help her with basic food needs and give her advice in raising her children. We encourage her to remain faithful at church and trust in the Lord. *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world* (James 1:27).

➔ Another missionary tells us of a sponsorship program to help needy children. To qualify for the financial assistance each family must be interviewed and registered. There are hundreds of needy children around us. What would you do?

We went house to house visiting families living in miserable conditions; taking pictures and filling out application forms. We left some basic food staples and prayed with the families in hopes that we can offer regular help in the future. *Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy* (Proverbs 31:9).

The young people at church love to sing and present programs. They really wanted to meet regularly and work on a cantata. So we are practicing weekly and one more item was added to our schedule.

This is just a glimpse of some of the important "interruptions" that became part of our ministry in the last few months. They were not part of our plan, but God had His agenda for us. While we often feel inadequate to deal with the surprises God brings to us, we have discovered the truth of the Apostle Paul's affirmation: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).


Many times we step out in faith to

respond to a need, not knowing how we will be able to meet that need, but God knows. We have experienced time and time again the miraculous provision of God as we reach out in love to those around us. Friends far away feel moved by God to send in a special offering to help with our needs. People from our Brazilian churches contribute with food supplies or we are able to sell something we no longer need and the list could go on.

One example of "casting our bread upon the water" (Ecclesiastes 11:1) started a year ago when we agreed to host a missionary family who was moving to Curitiba from another city. Their family of ten plus eleven others who were helping them move stayed with us at the ARCA for two weeks. We cooked, baby sat, washed clothes and helped however we could. Some of the people who were helping were short-termers from Northern Ireland. Although they were with another mission helping street kids in Brazil, they became interested in our ministry as well. We've been in touch through letters ever since. Last week we received an unexpected check in the mail from their mission (South American Mission) designated to help with our ministry at the ARCA. God's provision in His time proves His faithfulness to us as we reach out in love to those around us.

We are thankful for the ministry God has given us in Brazil. We are indebted to all those who support us so that we can be God's people in this place, sharing His goodness and His grace. Our regular ministry opportunities include full responsibility for two churches (Sao Braz and Bateias), management of the ARCA retreat center and participation in the beginning of a new preaching point.

The words of Jesus, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few," ring in our ears each day as we see unending opportunities and open doors for ministry in this great land.

"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38). What would you do? 



— Mrs. Becky Abel
Curitiba, Brazil

The author and her husband Paul have been AFLC missionaries in Brazil since 1985. They have four children and expect to return the United States for furlough in the spring of 1996.

The AFLC in Brazil grows and goes

In January 1996 the AFLC in Brazil will be celebrating its 30th Anniversary. That means a generation in this country. A church that is only a generation is considered very young. We are thankful to the Lord for church growth and the open doors into new areas.

This year our mission entered São Paulo, a new state and the largest city in South America. Missionaries David and Janet Abel are getting settled into this new ministry.

Next year, Lord willing, the AFLC will penetrate another new state, Mato Grosso do Sul, and enter its capital, Campo Grande. We thank the Lord for opening these doors and we ask you to remember these new challenges in prayer.

We are now seeing new missionary faces arrive in Brazil in a manner never seen before. The David Nelsons arrived last April and are studying language in Campo Mourão. The Jim Winters from Canada will arrive this fall to work with abandoned children. Early next year Sonja Dahl is scheduled to start work in Brazil.

The Brazilian national pastors and families are growing too. There are now eleven pastors, including the senior seminarians, who are serving churches.



AFLC missionaries and national pastors with their families in Brazil.



Lucwania and Lauro with their new son. They are houseparents at the Miraim Infant Home.




The Brad Shelstad family, Ortonville, Minnesota, with LaRue Goetz of STEER, Inc. They are one of three families at Abiding Faith Lutheran who are participating in the STEER program.

The Bible School and Seminary will begin a new intensive program starting next school year. Students will be able to choose one of six specialized courses that include: missions, pastoral training, evangelism, music, Christian education and Bible culture. These studies will not only include classroom work, but practical time in the field of study.

The Bible camps in Curitiba and Campo Mourão are kept busy with weekend retreats and summer camps both for our churches and other Christian groups. Thousands of youth have been touched by the Lord through these camps.

The abandoned babies and children in Campo Mourão and street children in Vitória are being attended to in Christian love. The Lord has raised up special people who have heeded the call to work with these children who have been abandoned by their parents.

Consider visiting the Brazilian field yourself. We are looking forward to seeing many AFLC supporters at our 30th Annual Conference, January 12-14, 1996 in Campo Mourão, Parana. 

— Rev. Connely Joel Dyrud
Field Conference President

Multiplied giving to World Missions through STEER, Inc.

For the year ending June 30, 1995, AFLC World Missions received \$10,493.94 through the STEER program. This is nearly double the amount received just two years ago by the AFLC! Working together, donors and farmers/ranchers provide perpetual income for missions. Join this growing group of mission supporters by contacting the World Missions office.

But are we missionaries yet?

"Is it soup yet?" The advertisement showed mom making soup. Each of the family members would ask with anticipation, "Is it soup yet?" Finally, mom would say, "It's soup!" How wonderful if we could send out missionaries who already knew the language and culture of those with whom they would work. "Instant missionaries: just add a country." It is however, seldom that easy.

Instead, missionaries need time in a language school or with a private teacher. The first year of



Temporary housing in Potharlanka, India, where a tragic fire swept through recently. The AFLC-supported mission is the only one in that village. The AFLC responded with relief supplies.



Partners in Mission workers building a church in Agrasistas, Mexico last winter. Partners in Mission Outreach is planning four, two-week trips into Mexico this coming winter and summer.

Schierkolks conclude language training in December

On December 18, 1995, Rev. Todd and Barb Schierkolk expect to finish their language school in Texas and will return to Wisconsin for Christmas. After speaking at the AFLC Missions Conference in Minneapolis February 11-14, 1996, they will move to Aguascalientes, Mexico, where they will begin serving with Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles.

language training is a very important foundation for ministry in another culture.

If you have studied a foreign language, you know that there are plenty of opportunities to laugh at yourself. Recently, Sarah and I saw a film-developing store that advertised "disk development" in the window. We were pleased because Debbie Kirk, a short-term missionary helping with our boys, needed more disk film for her camera. I went in the store and asked for disk film.

The sales person brought a roll of 35mm film. It was obvious that I did not get my point across. "Disk film," I said once again. I even used hand gestures to illustrate.

Now she'll understand, I thought. She didn't: I did. That sign in the window was not advertising a type of film. Rather, it was an offer for customers to call (disque) the store so they could pick up your film, develop it and return it to your door. I smiled, said, "thank you," and returned to the van. Another unforgettable lesson in language training: "Film Development 102."

Our language teacher, Ivany, recently tried to encourage us about our future. (This was shortly after I confused cereal and serious. Instead of talking about problemas serios, I said something about problemas ceriais.) She reminded us that if people really know that you love and care about them, they overlook a lot of mistakes.

Are we done yet? No! We still have so much to learn about the language and culture of Brazil. We continually need your prayers — what an encouragement they are to us. We continually need the Lord's help. Without that we would have given up a long time ago.

Our son recently asked, "But are we missionaries yet?" Yes, by the grace of God. And we have the same promise that all true Christians have to cling to and claim: "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, he may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another" (John 15:16,17).



— Rev. David Nelson
Campo Mourão, Brazil

From the Home Mission Director

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

I Thessalonians 3:12-13

The first few weeks as your new Home Mission Director have been far from boring. God has allowed me to be in eight states and visit a few of our AFLC churches.



The Home Missions Committee: (seated) Rev. Paul Nash, director; Rev. Al Monson, chairman; Mr. Bob Christian; Rev. John Skeie (standing) Mr. Halvor Knapp; Rev. Steve Mundfrom; Pastor Henry Mohagen and Rev. Tony Stockman.

Where we are



AFLC Home Missions serves 28 congregations and AFLC - Canada.

There are some real areas of concern which I share with you:

In the verses mentioned, the writer's hope was that the Christians would increase and abound in love for each other. To me this is also our need in the AFLC as we become more like Christ — being selfless and willing to share of our resources, prayer time and talents.

Today we are facing increasing shortfalls in our financial intake to meet the needs which we have committed to in home missions. However, it also needs to be said that until our hearts are blameless in holiness before God, we may continue to have shortfalls. This often indicates a lack of information of the need or reflects a spiritual coolness towards the Lord's work.

I pray the following will encourage our AFLC family as we work together in Christ.

- Pray for your servants in the AFLC — pastors, teachers, missionaries, home mission congregations and the leadership in our schools and departments. We seek to build the body of Christ, however, we desperately need your prayer cover to do this.

- How wonderful it would be if each of our established congregations would adopt a home mission congregation. Be in contact with them and ask about their needs and struggles. Pray daily for that young congregation. I believe we would see in time thriving home mission churches. Today as I write, I am saddened to report that many of our mission congregations feel as orphans, and some may even have to close for lack of prayer, financial support and lack of a pastor.

- Pray for and encourage men to be trained for ministry throughout the country.

We in the home mission office will be glad to direct you to a congregation in need. You only need to contact us. We are always glad to visit with you or your congregation to share the work of AFLC Home Missions.

Thank you for your prayers and support. May the Lord find us faithful when He returns.



— Rev. Paul Nash
AFLC Home Mission Director
Minneapolis, Minnesota
(612) 545-5631

I Enjoy Being a Woman

When we moved to Wisconsin I was delighted with the large kitchen windows over my sink. I could see the comings and goings of six different families. During my first neighborhood gathering I proudly remarked on how much I already knew about my neighbors from my quiet observations. Perceptively, one of the women reminded me: "Don't forget, we all have windows and have been watching you, too!"

I Enjoy Being a Neighbor

No matter how confined we are, we cannot live an isolated life. Whether we intend to be or not, we are Christ's witnesses (Isaiah 43:10 and Acts 1:8). Evangelism, God's great purpose for His Church, is a joyful, energetic, natural outflow of our walk with Christ. We can enjoy being a neighbor!

I. The Commission

1. A word picture is given in II Corinthians 2:14-17 and 5:20. What is the fragrance? Who is the source? How does God accomplish evangelism?

2. If you are a Christian, you are a chosen vessel for evangelism. What are three reasons why we may not be fervent witnesses? What is a remedy?

II Peter 1:9

Matthew 5:14,15

Galatians 5:14

Are we so glued to our routines and schedules that we can not consider the highest good of our neighbor? We must be on guard as the symptoms of an ingrown life are subtle.

II. The Witness



To be a witness is to plant the seed of God's Word, nurture and water it, but God alone produces life and gives growth.

3. An important prerequisite to fruitful gardening is that the gardener be knowledgeable about his task. How can we apply this to witnessing?

John 15:4; 14:23

Matthew 4:19

II Peter 1:8

4. Does this mean we have to be spiritual giants before we are qualified to witness?
Acts 4:13

5. Parallel the four fields described in Acts 1:8 with your own situation. Where are you meant to witness?

6. How do we choose those we witness to? Who is your neighbor?

I Timothy 2:4

James 2:1, 8-9

7. The Holy Spirit prepares the individual heart to receive a Christian's verbal witness, but we can do much to arouse curiosity and stimulate interest. Consider these:

Colossians 1:10

I Thessalonians 5:22

Proverbs 13:20

Speak to God about people, then to people about God.

8. We would consider it foolish to till our garden and never plant a crop. Too often spiritually we rely on our living witness and never plant the seed (God's Word) of a verbal testimony. What are the two components of a spoken witness?

Acts 4:20

Acts 8:35 (see Luke 24:47-48)

9. "But I just can't open my mouth; I don't speak well." Yes, we all have a measure of this fear. What is God's message for us?

Exodus 4:10-12

Jeremiah 1:6-9

10. It is important to communicate the heart of the gospel message, not the secondary trimmings. What is the difference between the two?

II Corinthians 4:5

I Corinthians 2:1-2

11. Bible study is vital to giving a sound witness. What key phrase from I Peter 3:15 indicates this?

12. Our consistent living witness is a powerful tool to prepare the ground to share Christ with our neighbor. What are other potential tools for planting, nurturing and watering?

How can we use our homes as tools for witnessing?

Luke 14:12-14

Acts 5:42

Witnessing will take effort. That involves forethought, preparation and blocks of time set aside. What do these verses have to do with investing time?

Proverbs 18:24

Galatians 6:9

I Corinthians 15:58

Be alert for opportunities. Everyday conversation affords ideal openings to share a verbal witness. In what other ways can we be alert?

Proverbs 17:17; 27:10

James 2:17

Live considerately in your relationships with your neighbor. What is the practical counsel of Proverbs?

11:12-13

17:9

24:28-29

25:27

27:24

13. How large is your neighborhood? What solemn words confront us concerning our commission?

Proverbs 24:11-12; 28:27

Matthew 25:45



Look at your neighbors. Some are lonely, depressed, neglected, suffering, hungry and enslaved. Many are literally dying without Christ. Look out your kitchen window with open eyes, ears, hearts and hands and respond to the cries of your neighbors. Then you will enjoy being a gardener for God!

Last in a series.

The joy of the Lord was her strength

Lillian's voice was low as she greeted those of us who had come to her. It was shortly before she was to return to Canada so that she could be near family. A debilitating illness had progressed so that she now required a wheelchair and help with her eating and dressing.

I was struck by her beauty, because her face was so radiant. I observed that she wore a becoming color and her hair was attractively combed, and I wondered how that had been accomplished. Each one who talked with her seemed to soften at her words. Not until refreshments were served did I notice the young woman who sat beside her. I saw the gentleness with which she fed Lillian bites of cake or lifted the glass with the straw to her mouth. Each movement was done so quietly and with such confidence that one was hardly aware that Lillian couldn't eat by herself.

That was a long time ago now, but I never forgot that visit. Since then I have looked for reports that have come from mutual friends who made the trip to Canada to visit these two special

women — Lillian and her caregiver, Delinda.

Now last August, a copy of "The Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving" held by friends who couldn't be at the funeral for Lillian came in the mail. I was touched as I reflected on her life. For 34 years the ravages of disease had changed Lillian's life. She went as a young woman to be a missionary. She directed a school and enthusiastically taught girls about Jesus; many of her students became pastors' wives. When her health changed and after the diagnosis at age 37, she had to give here life's dream of being a missionary back to the Lord and stay in the States. It is said of her, "Lillian learned through experience that one of the secrets of victorious living was 'in everything give thanks,' regardless of circumstances." Her constant testimony was: "God is so good!"

A situation she did not choose became an opportunity to glorify God. The Savior she had invited into her heart as a young girl after her aunt Violet taught her the way of salvation was not only her motivation for her life's work,


but He also was her source of strength when her physical strength was gone. The joy of Jesus touched her life, and in turn affected the life of each one who met her.

Her caregiver, Delinda, chose a situation she did not have to share and expressed a dedication rarely seen. For 28 years she faithfully took up the responsibilities of daily care. Much of her life was given to someone she chose to care for. "Together they endeavored to glorify God," the tribute read.

Few of us will know whether we could say, "God is so good," were we in such circumstances.

The focus of this year's WMF Bible Study has been *I Enjoy Being a Woman*. Individual aspects of that role have included that of wife, mother, the single woman, the aging woman and the one going through trials or sorrows. Many Scriptures have verified that women are honored by God, upheld by Him and that He knows each of us by name. The privilege of serving our Lord is so great that we can truly enjoy being a woman whoever we are, wherever we live and whatever God has called us to do.

If new friendships have formed through this year's study that is a plus. The encouragement to reach out to another generation continues. May we continue to "encourage one another and build up one another" (I Thessalonians 5:11).

In a changing world where various voices would prescribe a woman's role, it is our challenge to keep our eyes on Jesus — to be women with an attitude of gratitude, daring to believe and live in this, that "God is so good." With that song in our spirit we can honestly say, I enjoy being a woman. 

— Mrs. Dee Berkas
National WMF President
Wallace, South Dakota



Pictured are the AFLC district and national officers who met in June, 1995, before the annual convention at the ARC near Osceola, Wisconsin.

God's power and faithfulness at work

Have you ever read the book of Acts and marveled at how God used a few faithful men and women who were filled with the Holy Spirit to build His Church? That account of the early church is fascinating when I realize what has taken place over the centuries and how it relates to us today.

Jesus says in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." I sometimes catch myself thinking that the early church was different than it is now. But when I take time to really reflect on how God is working in our midst, I realize that God is still actively building His Church.

When I consider what God has done in our own congregation, Abiding Savior Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, I see God's power and faithfulness at work as in the early Church. I see how God inspired a few believers about eight years ago to seek a new emphasis on the truth of God's Word, resulting in an AFLC Home Mission congregation. I am thankful that we have a home missions department that can encourage new congregations like ours. Without this, our congre-

Some of the things God has done in an AFLC home mission congregation

gation and many others may not exist!

God has truly blessed Abiding Savior. We have experienced steady growth since the beginning. Many souls have come to Christ and many others have been nurtured and encouraged because we have a place where the truth of God's Word is preached and Christian fellowship can be shared.


Three years ago we added a Sunday school and fellowship addition to accommodate the growing need. About 18 months ago we began holding two Sunday morning services on a trial basis to meet our seasonal attendance and now we could never go back to one service.

This past year we decided to go off our home mission financial support, trusting God to supply in the future just as He has in the past. He has blessed us.

We are just beginning a radio broadcast of our Sunday morning sermons that will reach the Sioux Falls and surrounding area.

I am not sharing all this to boast or portray things as being perfect, but to show that God still builds His Church. He will use ordinary people like you and me as we yield ourselves to His work and follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

Acts 13:38 says, "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." This is the message that each congregation and individual believer needs to be urgent about sharing! Are we Spirit-filled witnesses?

We don't know what the future of Abiding Savior will be, but God does and we know that He is faithful and able. We need to pray for each other as congregations. We know that the battle for the souls of men and women rages on. Time may be short. We are thankful for the mission efforts of the AFLC and pray that God will continue to bless this work. Remember, God is depending on a few witnesses filled with the Holy Spirit. 

— by Phil Jensen
Abiding Savior Lutheran
Sioux Falls, South Dakota



A WMF rally at Abiding Savior Lutheran.

Melbourne, Florida

The old saying, "You don't miss the water 'til the well runs dry," came to mind many times after Mary and I moved to Melbourne, Florida in 1993 and tried to find a Bible-believing Lutheran church. Thankfully, we found fellowship at a nearby Grace Brethren Church, a spiritually-alive church body about the size of the AFLC, and with a similar emphasis. Yet we missed our Lutheran focus on Baptism and Holy Communion as sacraments, as well as various aspects of liturgical worship.

Our move to Florida initially was prompted by health considerations. Starting a new congregation was not on the agenda. Our intentions were to direct the work of Abiding Word Ministries from Florida — that and nothing more. But after a year without the fellowship of AFLC brethren, and realizing that our growing area could be blessed by an AFLC congregation, we committed the matter to prayer. As time went by, we sensed the Lord's leading that we should begin an AFLC work in Melbourne.

Melbourne, with a population of 65,000 people, is located on the Atlantic coastal waterway of central Florida, 30 minutes south of the Kennedy Space Center and 60 minutes east of Orlando.

My experience in starting a mission congregation is limited. When we began the work at Living Word in Eagan, Minnesota in 1985, we had over 90 people on our first Sunday. When we started the work in Melbourne, Mary and I were the only "members" and our personal tithe was its total budget. We did not know a single person who shared our vision to establish an AFLC congregation.

We began our efforts to establish a new

Church planting

congregation by placing ads in the local paper. The first response came from Larry Walker, a former member of the AFLC congregation in Kenyon, Minnesota. Mary and I distributed fliers to hundreds of homes in the Melbourne area. We had two informational meetings with a total of 13 persons responding. It became clear that building a core group would take time.

Sensing a need for help to get this work off the ground, we contacted Pastor John Abel. Having so many obligations with Abiding Word Ministries, my heart sank as Pastor Abel informed me that he had already committed himself with the Home Missions Committee to help organize a new work in Texas.

Pastor Abel was in Texas only a couple of weeks when the doors were closed to his further involvement. He called to ask if we still wanted him. How happy we were when he arrived in Melbourne last September! His wife Ruby and her dear mother joined him in November.

Pastor Abel and I knocked on hundreds of doors, talking with people and handing out fliers that described our work. Pastor Abel continued the door to door visitation through the winter months. Elden and Faith Nelson, along with their son Andy, came to be with us for our first service on October 23, 1994, at nearby Brevard Community College. A total of 29 persons attended.

Much like California, Florida is a difficult place to plant a new congregation. People are geared to "fun in the sun," with little thought for the Lord. While liberal and charismatic congregations seem to attract crowds, conservative, Bible-believing Lutheran congregations have to build their bases more slowly. Talented and committed people are now a part of our fellowship. We are thankful for each person God is sending us.

This month, Abiding Word Free Lutheran Church will be incorporated as the first AFLC congregation in the state of Florida. Trusting in the Lord's faithfulness, we are confident of the future.

The Abels plan to return in October to help us during the fall and winter

Rev. Frank Cherney spoke for the AFLC Pension Board at the All-Board meeting on September 26 at the ARC. He is also the new pastor of the home mission congregation in Tucson, Arizona.



in new places

Loveland, Colorado

About two and a half years ago, the Lutheran Church of Hope was started by a group of people that had left various churches in the Loveland, Colorado area. The reasons we had left varied, but all of us shared a concern that our former churches seemed to be more involved with politics and social issues of the world. We felt that they had strayed from the teachings of the Lord.

There was a period of hurting that drew us together and in the process, we decided to have our own worship services until we had further direction. Many of the people attended various churches but always seemed to return to our original group.

Several lay people took turns preaching, but we all missed communion on a regular basis. We invited retired pastors to prepare the communion services for us and that seemed to work well for the time. Our first rental facility became unavailable, but the Lord provided some-

Opportunities abound for AFLC Home Missions! We thank God for each one who has faithfully prayed for and supported this ministry. However, to maintain current obligations we borrowed \$35,000. We ask you to consider this need and help us go over the top by December 31, 1995.

— Home Missions Committee

thing very beautiful at the Hunter Chapel at 2100 North Lincoln Ave. and we continue to worship there.

We were hopeful to start a new church, but it seemed that every corner we turned led us into a brick wall. Yet God was leading as each apparent dead end actually opened a new path for us. By this time, several retired pastors and pastors from different denominations had preached for us, but still no one permanent. During this time, we started looking at different groups and their beliefs and finally felt that the AFLC was the affiliation with →


months. Gustav and Hanna Upmanis, members of Living Word in Eagan, Minnesota, expect to return to help us as they did last winter. A number of friends from the North and Midwest stopped by to visit and worship with us. We cannot overstate how greatly their presence encouraged us. One AFLC pastor and his wife have been sending a contribution for this new work every month. Others have given special gifts to see this work go forward.

If you are planning to visit Florida this winter, we encourage you to put Abiding Word on your itinerary. Presently we rent space in a lovely facility, Brevard Home Builders and Contractors' Building in Melbourne. Whether you can stay for a few hours, a few days or weeks, we need and appreciate your presence. Call us at 407-253-9387.

AFLC congregations far from the Midwest often feel isolated. If you are planning to be in Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Oklahoma, Texas, or some other place, visit the AFLC congregations and mission works. Your presence will

mean more than you will ever know. If you have the ability to visit for a period of time, become involved in the congregation. You might even plan your vacation around such a "mission" theme.

It is our vision that eventually God will provide us with funds to buy or build a facility that incorporates a small retreat center. We do not plan to have a traditional church building; rather one that will be used seven days a week to spread the Word of God. Here in the tourist capital of the country, a retreat center will give a comfortable place for visitors to stay where they can experience worship services, Bible studies, seminars and opportunities for ministry.

Please pray for Abiding Word Free Lutheran Church and for all AFLC mission congregations throughout the country that are laboring hard to become viable, soul-winning ministries of the gospel. 



*— Rev. David R. Barnhart
Abiding Word Lutheran
Melbourne, Florida*



Brad and Wendy Kupser

A quilt full of

Wendy Hammer (AFLBS, 1987) arrived at First Lutheran in Camarillo, California in 1990 to be our youth director. We immediately took her into our hearts and the kids loved her. She and Bradley Kupser were married on December 15, 1990.

We rejoiced with them when Rachael Nickole Kupser was born on September 15, 1991. She was a beautiful baby.

When she was four months old Wendy and Rachael flew back to Minnesota and North Dakota for a vacation. Rachael became ill. The doctors did not know what it was, so Wendy brought her home. Her pediatrician put her in the hospital for a week thinking it was hepatitis.

Rachael did not improve so she was sent to UCLA for a battery of

tests. She was diagnosed with Krabbes disease. This is a genetic disease where the baby's brain deteriorates from the top down — losing the ability to eat, sight, hearing and eventual death.

Rachael came home with a feeding tube in her stomach and lived to be fourteen months old; the last months as a vegetable. Rachael died on November 18, 1992 and Rebekah Noel was born on December 20, 1992. We knew she also had the disease because Wendy had amniocentesis done.

LOVELAND, COLORADO

which we would feel the most comfortable.

We contacted the AFLC Home Missions Committee and worked with Pastor Elden Nelson. We applied for mission status and started the process of calling a pastor. This was more of a struggle than we expected. We were so new and the only AFLC church in Colorado and surrounding area.

We invited some of the pastors to come out for interviews and meet with us. Some seemed enthused but did not feel the Lord was leading them to be our pastor. The mission board advised us to get an interim pastor. Pastor Walter Johnson arrived last March. While here he introduced us to many things about the AFLC and other pastors with whom he was acquainted.

During July, the FLY Conference was held in nearby Estes Park. We arranged for a meeting with the new Home Missions Director, Pastor Paul Nash and some other mission committee members while they were attending the youth conference. We also hosted the AFLBS Ambassadors and several from our church attended the Estes Park meetings. The fellowship and camaraderie was unbelievable. This seemed to be the turning point for us. Less than two weeks later Pastor Larry Haagenon came to visit us and accepted the call we had

issued. He began serving us full time in September.

Now as we look back we recall the times we asked ourselves if it was worth it and if we were going to make it. We kept telling each other that the Lord would not have kept us together for so long if He wasn't going to see us through the tough times. It was truly a case of when one door closed, another opened. We believe that He was testing us to see if we really wanted to make a go of it.

The experience made us appreciate each other, drew us closer together and thrilled us to see what can happen when the Lord is leading His Church. We also learned how sad it is when politics invade and take over the church beliefs and the Lord is left out.

We are very excited to be getting established and to see where the Lord will lead. There are a lot of people in our area that are looking for a church home where they can truly hear the teachings of our Lord. We are praying that we may provide that home for them.

It has been so gratifying to have a number of AFLC visitors recently. Come worship with us and let us praise the Lord together!



— Don McDaniel
Lutheran Church of Hope
Loveland, Colorado

meaning

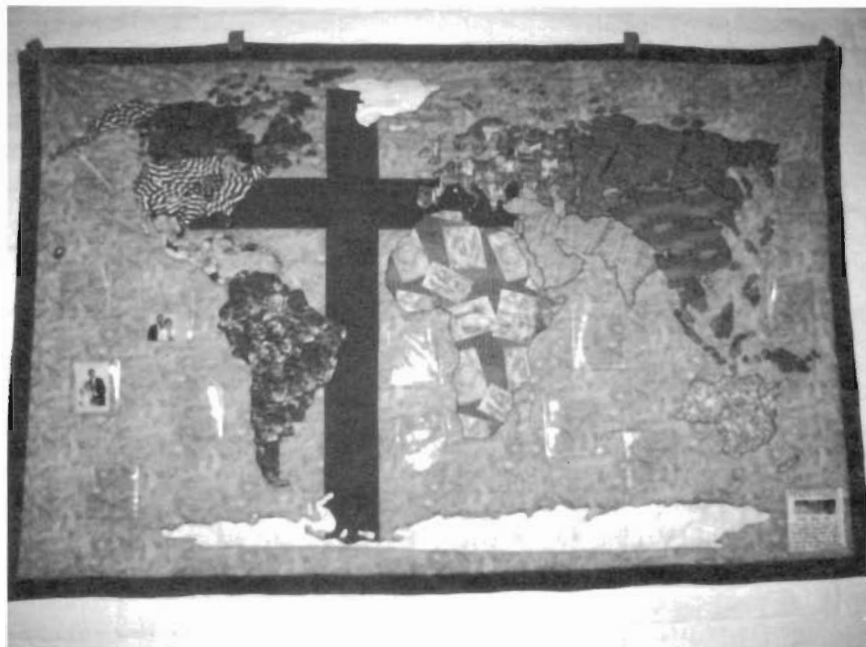
Brad and Wendy decided against a feeding tube and Rebekah lived almost nine months. She died on September 13, 1993. Wendy and Brad had lost two babies in less than a year. The whole congregation mourned with them.

Wendy didn't know how to sew when she came to California, but Brad encouraged her to buy a used sewing machine at a yard sale. Wendy got into making quilts and does a beautiful job. The last two years she has sold quilts at our WMF Craft Fair and did very well.

Wendy and Brad were surprised earlier this year to learn she was expecting again. We hoped and prayed that this time the baby would be healthy. Brad took a job in Minnesota and Wendy stayed here in California because of the insurance. During this time she sewed a beautiful missions quilt to hang on the wall at First Lutheran.

Jacob Bradley was born July 10, 1995 and weighed in at nine pounds; a cute little boy with lots of blond hair. Brad was able to return for the birth and baptism of Jacob.

We went to church on Sunday July 23 hoping to see Wendy and Jacob once more before they left



for Minnesota. Instead Pastor Molstre read the following letter:

July 19, 1995

Dear friends,

Brad and I want to thank you for the last five and a half years. We have enjoyed the fellowship with you here at First Lutheran. Your love and prayers have meant so much to us and you have been such an encouragement to us through our difficult losses.


This quilt is a gift to you for all your kindness and support. I made it in memory of Rachael and Rebekah and in honor of our son, Jacob. As I sit here holding him I am reminded that our Lord will never leave us or forsake us and that He has a plan, a future and a hope — for each one.

I told some of you that I would be in church one more time on July 23, but on Tuesday the 18th, I received a call from UCLA; our new little Jacob also has Krabbes disease. I wish I could share this news with you personally but I feel I need to be with Brad as soon as possible and tell him in person. We again covet your prayers as we face these next months, and inevitable loss once again. Life is definitely not easy; I

am just so thankful that God is with us and we don't have to face these things alone. What a tragedy it would be if Jesus were not a part of our lives; if we had no hope in Him to look forward to.

My prayer is that each time you look at this quilt you will be reminded of all the people in this world who don't know about the good news of Jesus, and that you will "always be ready to give an account of the hope that is in you." We love you and will miss you terribly.

In Jesus,
Wendy

When Pastor Molstre read this, I do not believe there was a dry eye in the church. The mission quilt is beautiful and adds so much to our sanctuary. When Pastor Molstre goes back to the "All Boards" meeting in Minneapolis at the end of September, he will bring us the cards with pictures of all the missionaries to put in the clear plastic pockets Wendy sewed unto the quilt. Right now we only have the Nelsons and the Shierkolks on the quilt. 

— Karen G. Cozatt,
First Lutheran Church Secretary
Camarillo, California



OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

Evangelism in the AFLC

Fall is harvest time in our rural parishes, as farm families reap the fruit of their labors after long months of caring for their crops. Early reports promise a bountiful harvest in the Upper Midwest, where many AFLC congregations are located. God's people remember to praise Him from Whom all blessings flow.

Fall is harvest time in the spiritual realm, too, for many AFLC congregations. It is customary in many communities for evangelistic services to be scheduled during this time of year, and reports have already reached us of the fruit from some of these outreach efforts. Our congregations in northern Illinois, for example, cooperate in an area evangelism conference with joint morning Bible study sessions in one host church and separate evening services in the others.

The 1994 Annual Conference recommended that a full-time evangelist be called to serve within our association, filling a position that has been vacant since the death of Rev. Kenneth Pentti in 1985. The lack of financial support has hampered progress toward making this resolution a reality. A generous grant from Aid Association for Lutherans is available to fund a

study of current AFLC evangelism programs as well as future needs. I would hope that some concrete steps will be taken toward the goal of a new full-time evangelist.

In my report to the last conference, it was suggested that congregations be encouraged to receive a special offering designated for AFLC Evangelism. Perhaps there will be some response to this need in the months to come. Above all, however, we are called to prayer, that the Lord will supply our need according to His will in His time (see Matthew 9:37-38).

Harvest time continues whether the AFLC calls a full-time evangelist or not. It would be erroneous to imply that the ministry of evangelism in a congregation is confined to a series of special services once a year. An evangelist could be a valuable resource to our fellowship, yet we must not forget that the majority of our harvest labor occurs through the regular, faithful ministry of a congregation using the means of grace throughout the year. This must never be minimized.

May God grant us burning hearts for bringing the lost to Christ, in season and out of season!

— Rev. Robert L. Lee

Newfolden, Minnesota — Westaker Free Lutheran held their first Sunday worship service in their new building on September 10, 1995. The congregation was organized in 1887 and the first structure was built in 1899. The larger, one-floor new building continues to receive finishing touches. Along with outside contractors, Gary Hodne, the congregation's vice chairman, led the volunteer workers throughout the construction.

Ottawa, Illinois — Faith Lutheran, pastored by Rev. Gary Jorgenson, will have special evangelistic meetings October 22-25. The speaker will be Rev. Craig Johnson, pastor of Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Oregon and editor of The Lutheran Ambassador.

Cloquet, Minnesota — St. Paul's Lutheran is hosting the "First Annual Revival Conference" during November 3-5, 1995. This Revival Bible Conference is sponsored by a group of AFLC pastors and laity. Speakers are: Pastors Steve Lombardo, David Barnhart, Dr. Craig Jennings, Ralph Tjelta, Einar Unseth, Robert Koepp, Paul Larson, Emerson Anderson, Peter Franz and Mr. Clifford Johnson. Pastor John and Barb Skeie are the music leaders. For more information call St. Paul's Lutheran at (218) 879-5956.

Tour to Scandinavia — Rev. Walter and Marilyn Johnson are leading a tour through Scandinavia, including Stockholm, Copenhagen and scenic Norway on July 3-17, 1996. For more information contact them at 937 Swift Ave., Shakopee, MN 55379, (612) 445-9010.

Oceanside, California — Community Bible Church held a Bible Conference on the weekend of August 19-20, along with the celebration of Rev. Orville and Florence Heipeler's 50th wedding anniversary. Pictured to the left, is the Heipeler family who gathered for the occasion.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Beulah, North Dakota — Rev. John Mundfrom was installed as the first pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran on Sunday, August 27, 1995 with Rev. Robert Lee, president of the AFLC, officiating.

Following a noon meal, the congregation dedicated their first church building at 409 E. Main Ave. in Beulah. The mission congregation was formed two years ago by interested people in the Beulah, Hazen and Halliday areas of western North Dakota. Pastor Mundfrom began serving them part-time in January of 1994 and continued until taking the full-time call as of August this year. The Mundfroms' new address and phone number is 517 Chaffee Row, Beulah, ND 58523, (701) 873-2785.



Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, North Dakota.

Rev. Rolf Heng, Beltrami, Minnesota is serving as interim pastor of Maple Bay Lutheran, rural Mentor. Pastor Heng continues to serve as the pastor of Resurrection Lutheran in Beltrami.

In memorial

Paul Flaten, 75, Newfolden, Minnesota died on September 4, 1995 at a Fargo, North Dakota hospital. He was born on August 19, 1920. Though a farmer by occupation, he found his greater joy in reaching out to others with the gospel. He and Harvey Dyrud often were found visiting in area hospitals and nursing homes. He served two terms on the AFLC Home Missions Committee in the

1970s and was a lay preacher. He served Golden Valley Lutheran of Wanaska, Minnesota.

He is survived by his wife, Ellen; children Orpha (Jakob) Scheffhauser, Alva (Cliff) Dyrud, Emory (Jennifer), and Mary Ellen (Christian) Scheffhauser; and 13 grandchildren. Orpha served many years as the secretary to the dean of AFLBS and then as secretary to the AFLC president. Emory is currently a member of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.



AFLC Home Missions Committee in the 1970s: (Standing) Pastors Richard Anderson, David Molstre and Phil Haugen, (Seated) the late Mr. Paul Flaten and Mr. Joel Rogenes.



London, Minnesota — Pictured are five young girls adopted from India by three families of the Faith Lutheran congregation of London.

Mrs. Chester (Verdi) Halverson, Tioga, North Dakota passed away on July 21, 1995. She was the first president of the Eastern Montana-Western North Dakota District WMF. She had been an active member of Beaver Creek Lutheran for 53 years.

Olve Willand, 87, of Triumph Lutheran, died on July 1, 1995 at his home in Ferndale, Washington. He was a life-long Lutheran Free Church and AFLC member. He was especially active in the annual conferences of the AFLC during the early years.

London, England — The McDonald's logo — an arched M — and the shell used by an international petroleum company ranked higher in recognizability than the Christian cross, accord-

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ing to a survey of 7,000 people in
six countries.

Christopher Mayfield, the
Anglican Bishop of Manchester,
told the Daily Mail newspaper in
London, "The Olympic movement,
Shell and McDonald's have a
worldwide vision, so they are to
be congratulated on getting their
message across to the world.
Christianity also has a worldwide
vision, but we have not been so
successful in communicating the
faith. We have got to do better."

New York — Morality in
Media, a national interfaith orga-
nization, reports that individuals
and organizations throughout the
country have begun preparations
for the eighth annual White Rib-
bon Against Pornography cam-
paign, which is scheduled for
Sunday October 29 through Sun-
day November 5.

The effort last year drew
proclamations of support from
more than 20 governors and
scores of mayors, and involved
churches and other community
organizations, businesses, state
and local legislators, prosecutors
and police in a wide range of
activities.

The annual demonstration is
intended to educate the public
and to encourage enforcement of
federal and state obscenity laws.

Mexico City, Mexico — The
largest city in the world got its
first evangelical university late
this September. Mexican Chris-
tian Evangelical University
(UCEM) opened its doors Sept. 25
under the direction of Dr. Hum-
berto Rodarte Ramon, a Baptist
layman.

**Church furniture and
accessories available** — Due to
the closing of Scandia Valley Free
Lutheran Church near Stanley,
North Dakota, the members
would like to give the following
items to any church who needs
them: the altar and altar rail; the
altar's brass cross and two can-
dlesticks; one candle lighter; a
wooden communion set; offering
plates; baptismal font; pulpit; 12
pews; hymnal board; 14 Concor-
dia hymnals and 14 King James
Pew Bibles. If you would like any
or all of these items for your
church, please call Pastor Rodney
Johnson at (701) 628-2553.

Parsonage available to pur-
chase — The parsonage belonging
to Sunnyside Lutheran near
Stacy, Minnesota is for sale. This
older but recently refurbished
home is located on one acre in the
beautiful lake country just north
of Minneapolis/St. Paul. For more
information call the church at
(612) 462-4163.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - August 31, 1995

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,591.00	\$19,568.37	\$136,579.27	51
Seminary	163,200.00	5,383.94	69,324.22	42
Bible School	244,800.00	7,264.94	89,610.90	37
Home Missions.	335,040.00	14,146.23	161,836.68	48
World Missions.	359,927.00	21,616.89	184,920.65	51
Capital Investment	35,425.00	3,359.43	14,212.96	40
Parish Education	67,868.00	3,431.61	32,500.50	48
Church Extension	10,000.00	263.80	5,276.52	53
TOTALS	\$1,484,851.00	\$75,035.21	\$694,251.70	47
TOTALS 1994	1,422,890.00	68,277.07	728,159.41	51
Goal 67%				

Planting free congregations

In the later part of the 19th century, Georg Sverdrup came to America from Norway with a vision. He had seen in Europe the damaging effect papal domination and state church control had on spiritual life. He came to America, a mission field, with the hope of seeing the restoration of the true congregation following the model given in the New Testament. His vision was of free congregations being planted in America; congregations which would give and receive mutual assistance, but would be free from the domination and control of some hierarchical authority; congregations free to direct their own affairs, subject to the Word and the Spirit of God.

Georg Sverdrup became the "founding father" of the Lutheran Free Church, the church body that we in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations trace our heritage from and our fundamental principles. His vision, and our heritage, is of mission work being done by the planting of free congregations.

The first missionaries, in particular the Apostle Paul, had a clear sense of and a deep commitment to the mission God had given them to spread His Word throughout the world. The means they were led by God to use for doing this mission was to plant congregations in the various areas in which they traveled. Mission work can be done in a variety of ways, but planting free and living congregations should be seen as the chief and most lasting and effective way.

The congregations Paul planted were, from the beginning, treated as free. They did not have to go through a period of proving themselves and earning their freedom. Freedom, both on an individual and a congregational basis, is a gift from God that is never deserved but is graciously bestowed on us by Christ.

If a congregation and its members have received the Word and the Spirit of God, whether they are in the United States or another country, they have received freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (II Corinthians 3:17).

Congregations should not be considered free only after they are perceived to have reached a certain level of maturity or have some financial stability or reach an appropriate size. The congregation may be full of people who have no idea how things are done in America. It may have a lot of people who have very limited experience being involved in a congregation. It may need and should receive and be given assistance by others. It is still, however, free.

Each congregation, no matter in which country it may be planted, should have freedom in the various areas of congregational life. This is the Scriptural example as to what is right and, also, what is most effective for the spreading of the gospel.

Proclaiming freedom can seem like a frightening thing. We may worry about what will be done with that freedom. Paul did not fear, however, as he told the individuals and congregations he dealt with that they were free. He had confidence in God.

As he left Ephesus, Paul knew of the dangers the congregation would soon face. Still, his farewell to them was not filled with terror because, as he told the leadership, "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, NIV).

It is tempting to look in a variety of places to try to find hope and confidence for a congregation. We may think some kind of organizational structure or means of control is crucial. We may believe some certain pastor or the presence of an AFLC-trained individual or of an American is necessary for a congregation's survival.

A lot of things and people can play important roles, but ultimately all that we have and all that we need to trust in is God. A congregation and its members may lack many things, but they can keep on going and growing if they have Christ and His Word. That's enough.

An effective missionary

What makes for an effective missionary, either at home or abroad? A person with the same kind of qualities Jonathan Edwards longed to see in revival leaders in the 18th century.

He saw awakening as being hindered by spiritual pride that was apt to suspect others, quick to censure others and quick to separate from those whose beliefs or behaviors did not measure up. "Dogmatic inflexibility" that argues continually was to be avoided.

The effective revival leader, and missionary, instead was, and is, one who is "eminently humble ... clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behaviour."

As each of us who are children of God serve as missionaries in whatever field God has planted us, may we strive, by God's grace, to see those same qualities demonstrated in our lives in ever-increasing measure.

BUILDING THE BASE

Blessed Assurance

Is it possible to know for certain that if we died right now we would go to heaven?

Many would respond that they hope so, or they think they probably will, but, they feel they cannot be absolutely sure.

This is not the way Martin Luther responded to this question. He said, "We should thoroughly root out this pernicious error, with which the world is deluded, that a man may not know for a certainty whether he is in the state of grace or not."

Friends, this surely is one of the greatest errors people fall into. Unbelievers say, "Why bother to seek God if it is not possible to know for sure that you are saved. I'll just take my chances." And even sorrier are those who believe, but never reach that peaceful confidence, where they are certain they are at peace with God, all their sins are washed away, and that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for them. They fail to fully commit themselves to a God they are not certain is going to accept them; so they waste their lives half-heartily serving the Lord.

Why do so many lack this

assurance? This error comes not from God's failure to make it clear, but from our weak faith and our doubting hearts. God has clearly promised heaven to all who believe, but we do not believe what He has said. One only has to read through I John to see that we are not to go through life only hoping to be saved.

I John 3:14 — "We know that we have passed from death to life."

I John 3:19 — "This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence."

I John 3:24 — "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."

I John 5:10-13 — "Anyone who believes in the son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who

believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

John clearly taught that our salvation is something we can be certain of. We can know it in our hearts. And God, who cannot lie, has promised it. The reason we can be absolutely certain is because our salvation has nothing whatsoever to do with what we have or have not done. It is a free gift to all who will accept it. Jesus' death on the cross has guaranteed it for us all. It is bought and paid for with His blood.

Can you believe this good news? Not at all if you search for such faith inside yourself. But if you will open your heart to God, He will give such faith. His Spirit will come to live in you, and place "this testimony in your heart."

Oh, what joy and peace! We can know we are saved!



— Rev. Don
Voorhees
St. Peder's
Lutheran
Dannebrog,
Nebraska