

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

SEPTEMBER 2004

A warm, sepia-toned photograph of a woman with long dark hair smiling and hugging a young girl with dark hair. They are both smiling at the camera. The woman is wearing a dark sleeveless top, and the girl is wearing a light-colored shirt. They are sitting in a white wooden chair. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the chair and some indistinct shapes.

God's plan for
Christian Education

The subject of growth in one's Christian life has always been something I have struggled to understand and has recently been something very discouraging to me. Growth, as we usually understand the term, means to get larger in size or numbers. It is usually an improvement in some way. Gardeners and farmers are glad when their crops grow. Parents are proud of growth and development in their children.

In the recent past I perceived a "lack of progress" in my spiritual life. The result has become fear that I am not growing as a Christian should. I struggle with the same doubts and the same sins as I have in the past. I am no better than I was a year ago or five years ago. I am not making a greater effort to reach out to unbelievers, not being more kind to my neighbors, not turning any faster to the Lord in crisis or joyful moments. My devotional life does not show improvement. I don't feel a stronger faith or deeper trust in Him as time goes by. God

me.

Where is the growth here? This doesn't feel or look like growth to me. It seems more like death.

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Galatians 2:19-3:3).

Spiritual growth is not like other kinds of growth. It is not a program of self-improvement by which we use our human effort to become more pleasing to God. That would be self-righteousness. That would be "setting aside the grace of God." Unlike growth of a crop or a garden, spiritual growth is a constant cutting down of the person who is the Christian. It is God showing you that your striving and efforts of self-betterment are trash and have to be taken away; it is then that you sense your deadness. Then there is absolutely nowhere else to go but to the perfect Jesus, the perfect sacrifice on the cross, Jesus offering Himself up for each person's sins and sinfulness. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24). This is the good news.

May God continue to bring us back to our beginning, and may we never forget that we never outgrow our need for the cross.

— Karina Olson
Faith Free Lutheran
Minneapolis, Minn.

“Then there is absolutely no where else to go but to the perfect Jesus, the perfect sacrifice on the cross ...”

seems farther from my mind. And, to be honest, He seems unreal lately.

I tell myself, "This is ridiculous! Who do you think you are to still call yourself a Christian when you know all these things about yourself? You are an adult. You've been studying God's Word for years, you've been taught it your entire life and *this* is how far you've come?" To say it mildly, these are discouraging thoughts. I look at myself and that is what I see — hypocrisy, immaturity, self-centeredness, unfaithfulness, laziness, unbelief. This is what is real about

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**The purpose of opening the mind,
as of opening the mouth, is to
shut it again on something solid.**

— G.K. Chesterton

**His word is what changes
lives. His word is what
saves families. His word is
what brings back wayward
children. His word is what
encourages us as we walk
along the way.**

— Ken Ulmer

**For all its foibles ... the poky
local church in suburbia
is still the most fertile
environment for spiritual
development there. Genuine
spiritual progress doesn't
happen without a long-term
attachment to a poky local
church.**


— David Goetz

**There is no more terrible disaster with
which the wrath of God can afflict men
than a famine of the hearing of His Word.**

— Martin Luther

“The Freedom of a Christian”

these words, which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind the



the Family ALTAR

By SueAnn Berntson

**“Honey, I’m going to be
working late tonight.”**

**“Kids, it’s past your bedtime and you
have a big day tomorrow.”**

**The phone rings just as you sit
down for devotions.**

Does any of this sound familiar? Many obstacles spring up from our busy lives to divert us from family time in God’s Word. The enemy of our soul is ever bringing anything and everything to our mind that will nullify our desire to grow closer to our Lord. At times it just seems easier to bypass the family altar and let our spiritual training come solely from our church. But however wonderful our pastor or Sunday school teachers are, God’s Word clearly teaches that training up a child is primarily the job of parents. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 is a beautiful picture of living out our faith for our children to see and experience.

“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gate.”

The home should be the foundation of our children’s spiritual training. The groundwork takes place here on an everyday basis: “You ... shall talk of them when you sit in your house ...” (verse 7a). What greater joy can we experience than sharing our faith and love for our Savior with those precious little ones He entrusts to us? The things of God need to be incorporated into every part of our lives, as we talk about Him “when we walk by the way and when we lie down” (verse 7b). Our children need to see us go to the Lord in good times as well as in bad. We want our children to see that our faith is not just a religion, but a way of life.

My husband, Tim, and I have a unique opportunity in that we home school our children. This allows us to integrate biblical truths right along with our children’s regular school subjects. Through Bible-based curriculum, Christ is revealed as the author and focus of everything in His creation. Obviously, there are many challenges that come our way from day to day. The biggest temptation is to just get through each lesson instead of taking the time to enjoy it.

As a family, we also spend time in the Word in the evenings before bedtime. The Bible stories are read, we each take turns praying and then we sing a couple of hymns. Children seem to be naturally interested in lis-

tening to just about anything when the other alternative is bed! So bedtime works well for us. We have found that hymns are a great way to teach biblical doctrine as well as the testimony of spiritual experience. Even though our children may not understand all of what they are singing about, someday they will, and the words to those songs will be etched in their minds.

We have gone through special verses in the Bible for consecutive weeks until they have memorized passages of Scripture. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You.” When children are young, their minds are like sponges just soaking up all those wonderful words of life. An added benefit is that Tim and I learn those passages as well. We have also found the catechism to function well in the way Luther intended as our children have, through family study, memorized such things as the Commandments and their meanings.

Many times it takes a great deal of effort to get everyone together for family devotional time. As we have progressed through our parenting experience, we have begun to recognize that many times we find ourselves unconsciously doing the things our parents did. This realization has birthed the desire in us to build a heritage of faith, making it easier for our kids to establish family time when they, in turn, raise a family. I am so thankful my parents did that for me.

While the family is the primary sanctuary God has provided for children to be nurtured in their faith, the church has a wonderful secondary role in Christian education by supporting the family in all that it teaches. When our children step into church each week and the pastor and Sunday school teachers reinforce what they have already heard at home, the things of God are solidified in their hearts and minds. The church becomes for them what it is meant to be — that blessed fellowship of believers spoken of in Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking our own assembling together, but encouraging one another.” We rejoice that our kids find their fellowship with the Lord and their peers at the church. They need to identify themselves with a body of believers. This communion is an integral part of their spiritual growth.

Raising a child in “the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6) can be a very daunting task, one that we are altogether insufficient for. If we strive to bring up good kids to display like trophies for the world to see, we labor in vain. We must remember that the goal in Christian parenting is teaching and reproving our children to grow closer to Christ and become more like Him. As Paul writes in Philippians 3:14, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” As long as we’re on this side of heaven, we will never obtain the goal. “But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:57).

Berntson, Buffalo, N.D., is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.



PART

OF

THE

BODY

By Krissy Guhl

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER ARE BUSY months for Christian education departments at my church. We are busy finalizing curriculum choices for the year, planning what lessons will be taught, gathering supplies for those lessons, registering children, youths and adults for their programs, and finding volunteers who will commit to serving in various ministry positions for the year. Sometimes the biggest undertaking of all tends to be finding faithful volunteers to serve. Although people are willing to serve, the blessing they personally receive by serving others surprises most.

In I Corinthians 12:14-20, Paul writes, “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is there are many

parts, but one body.”

The needs we have in Christian education are vast and the programs we offer could not exist without our volunteers. The ladies who cut out crafts on a weekly basis do it with joy and excitement, those who teach the preschoolers love planting seeds of faith into the hearts of young children, and those who love music enjoy leading the kids in praise to God on Sunday mornings. There are passionate servants who volunteer in youth ministry, teaching confirmation classes and other youth Bible studies. Adults are able to attend classes on various topics or books of the Bible taught by gifted and mature adult believers. One person could not accomplish this all by himself or herself. We appreciate the many individuals who literally sacrifice their time and other activities in order to serve. We regularly recognize and bless our volunteers with notes of encouragement, small gifts, and volunteer banquet. At my church we do rely upon the body serving in order to carry out the commitment we’ve made to provide biblical teaching to all age groups.

Think back for a minute to the Sunday school teacher you had in preschool or in elementary school who taught you the song, “Jesus Loves Me,” or to the youth leader who helped you through a difficult time in your teenage years, or the camp counselor who encouraged your faith one summer, or to the adult who discipled you in the Word as a new believer. Whichever circumstance you can relate to, I’m sure those thoughts produced a smile on your face, filled



Become a Christian Ed volunteer

your heart with thankfulness, and overwhelmed you with gratitude for that person's faithfulness to input God's Word into your life. Each of those individuals was serving in areas of need in your church and being obedient to how Paul encourages us to work as a body. What a blessing they were in your life! "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news'" (Romans 10:14-15).

As you walk the halls of your church in the next few weeks, be praying and looking to see how God would use you. Keep your eyes and ears open to what's going on in the various ministries in your congregation. A benefit of serving in Christian edu-

cation is the opportunity to watch planted seeds of faith flourish in the life of someone else. Another benefit is serving to the glory of God, for "Whatever (we) do, whether in word or deed, (we) do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17). So whether you serve in a children's ministry, adult education, or with youths, you are involved in discipleship, encouraging others in faith as you minister unto the Lord. As you hold onto all that is yours in Christ, you can offer yourself as a servant in your congregation, remembering that Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Guhl serves as Children's Ministry coordinator for Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, MN.



Artist

Lessons from the Old Testament

By Dennis Norby

The Word of God is a precious treasure; throughout its pages we can hear God speaking to us about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many of us, when we begin to think about teaching about Jesus, quickly turn our attention to the Gospels. Indeed, there we have a beautiful picture of Jesus and the life that He lived and gave up for us. However, when we look at the Old Testament we may begin to wonder how we can teach about Jesus when He had not even been born.

In our minds we wrestle with some of the most wonderful things about Scripture. Our own reason tries to tell us that it is impossible that God planned for the salvation of humanity even from the very beginning and that He inspired prophets to speak of a future that they could not know on their own. However, the Old Testament does teach about Christ throughout its pages.

One way in which we are able to teach about Christ is simply by looking at Christ's lineage. It may sound almost too simple, but when we speak about those who came before Christ we have a great opportunity to teach about Jesus. Two examples come to mind. First in Ruth we see from whom David would come and, eventually, Jesus. Another example is in the book of Haggai. In this short book the governor of Judah, the leader of those who had returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple, is told that the Lord will make him "like my signet ring, for I have chosen you" (Haggai 2:23). This man, Zerubbabel, is listed in the lineage of Christ in both Matthew 1:12-13 and in Luke 3:27. In the Old Testament, we can teach Christ as we focus on how God carefully held together the line from which Jesus would come.

We can also see that the Old Testament is full of prophetic messages that speak of the coming of the Messiah. During Christmas we often teach about Christ when we see passages such as, "For to us a child is born to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6) or "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah ..." (Micah 5:2).

There are many other prophecies that instruct us about the office or work of Christ the Messiah. One example takes us all the way back to Genesis. The Bible begins with an amazing scene as God creates all that is. Turning to the next page, however, the scene is darkened by the sin of man. When we continue to read we see the promise of One to come in Genesis 3:15. There we see the prophecy of the One who would come and crush the serpent's head.

Through prophecy we can teach about Christ and how He fulfilled God's promise to man at the cross. In hundreds of promises in the Old Testament, we have the opportunity and privilege to teach Christ, the One who came for our redemption. The cross of Christ runs throughout the whole Bible.

A third opportunity for us to teach Christ in the Old Testament is by seeing those who acted in a manner that foreshadowed what Christ would do. In Moses we see a man leading God's people out of slavery in Egypt, and we can teach how Christ leads us out of the slavery of sin. In someone like Joseph, we can see how his mercy to his brothers mirrors Christ's mercy to all of mankind. Even Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1), a foreign king called the Lord's anointed, chosen by God to accomplish a certain task, foreshadows Christ, the Lord's anointed who fulfilled the task of reconciliation. These Old Testament characters

typify what Christ would be and accomplish to the highest degree.

Justification by faith ties the whole of Scripture together. Faith in the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus, the Anointed one, ties the Old and New Testaments together. The Old Testament shows the faith of those looking forward to the work that Jesus would do at the cross. All else, from New Testament up to today, looks back at the finished work of Jesus Christ. When we talk about the faith of the people in the Old Testament, we can talk about Jesus.

These are by no means all the examples or even all the ways in which we can teach Christ through the Old Testament. The Word of God is full of opportunities to teach about the Son of God. There are surely some difficult passages in the Old Testament where we may begin to wonder how it relates to Christ. Let us be diligent

in prayer and lean always on the strength of the Holy Spirit. We need to be mindful that we stay true to the literal meaning of the Scripture and the context of the passages we are examining. May God bless our study and teaching of Christ in the Old Testament.

Norby, an AFLTS seminary student, is in the midst of his fourth-year internship at the Dalton, Minn., three-point parish of Kvam Free Lutheran, Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran, and Tordenskjold Lutheran.

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faith's foundation

*Ambassador's
curriculum builds
and nurtures*

By Marian Christopherson

Psalm 78 emphasizes the necessity of intentional teaching from one generation to the next. Intentional, diligent teaching is also emphasized in many other Scripture passages, including Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:18-20. Christian education is necessary for all ages. A child is never too young to begin hearing Bible stories and music that teach the truths of God's Word. And one never outgrows the need for continuing study in the Word. Though the primary responsibility is given to parents, the congregation supports this work and sees the task of nurturing faith as one of its most important works.

The Parish Education department was established because the founders of the AFLC recognized that the teaching ministry of the local congregation serves a vital role in passing on the history of God's redemption and faithfulness from generation to generation. One way that AFLC congregations have worked together since the beginning to accomplish this task is through the development of our own Sunday school curriculum.

At the 1968 Annual Conference, an outline of proposed curriculum was presented and enthusiastically received by the conference. Though advancing technology allows for updated formatting and colorful illustrations, the original, carefully planned focus of the curriculum is timeless and has not changed. The Ambassador Sunday School Series systematically covers specific top-

ics in preschool through ninth grade so that students receive a comprehensive overview of the Scriptures as they move through the series. Several of the grades correlate with "Luther's Small Catechism" and help prepare students for confirmation. The curriculum upholds the authority and inerrancy of Scripture and focuses on the gospel as the power for salvation and sanctification. The curriculum also helps students understand the significance of the means of grace (the Word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper) in our daily lives. The Bible lessons nurture believers in their faith and call unbelievers to receive salvation through faith in Christ. The goal of the curriculum is spiritual life.

When AFLC curriculum for each grade level is planned and prepared, the primary focus is the content. The content — the gospel of Jesus Christ — has supernatural power (Romans 1:16). It is unchanging. Though other subjects such as math or science may change with new ideas and theories, God's revealed Word is complete and unchanging (Isaiah 40:8, Hebrews 13:8). In our human pride, we may like to think we have some kind of transforming power in winsome personalities and creative methods, yet only the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God has the power to transform hearts. The Word of God is the foundation of Christian education.



“In our human pride, we may like to think we have some kind of transforming power in winsome personalities and creative methods, yet only the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God has the power to transform hearts.”

Some of the foundational Bible truths that permeate Ambassador curriculum are: God's Word is truth. Man is sinful by nature. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The cross of Jesus Christ is the central theme of all Scripture, both Old and New Testament, and the thread of redemption history is woven throughout the entire Bible. The law reveals our sinfulness and need of a Savior. The gospel brings forgiveness of sin to the repentant heart. Godly living is a fruit of faith.

Scripture warns of being carried about by various doctrines contrary to the Word of God (Ephesians 4:14). We are surrounded by worldly philosophy, humanistic ideals, and liberal theology, which stand in opposition to Bible truths. But if we know truth, we will be better equipped to recognize error and stand against it. I Timothy 4:6 reminds us that we are to be “constantly nourished on the words of faith and of the sound doctrine.”

Recognizing the power of the Word of God to create and sustain spiritual life, Ambassador materials seek to help students become familiar with their own Bibles, that they might grow to know and love the Word of God and depend on it daily in their own personal lives. The materials also guide believers in establishing a daily devotional life of Scripture meditation and prayer and encourage Scripture memoriza-

tion to equip them to walk by faith in the midst of temptation and struggles.

An early informational brochure published by Parish Education states: “The Ambassador Sunday School Series is designed to be used as a tool in leading pupils to maturity in Christ (Colossians 1:28). The thoroughly biblical lessons are to be used by Spirit-led teachers in assisting their students to be hearers and doers of the Word. The purpose is not to entice or entertain the students, but to look to the Lord Himself to give life and to change lives.”

Maturity in Christ. Doers of the Word. Transformed lives. The goal of Ambassador curriculum is to nurture spiritual life and growth through the teaching of the Word in the local congregation. It emphasizes not simply a “head” knowledge of the Bible but an intimate, personal heart knowledge of God in Christ (John 17:3) that lives out its faith in such a way that it directs others to Christ the Savior.

For a complete overview of Ambassador curriculum, contact AFLC Parish Education. See page 14.

Christopherson is director of AFLC Parish Education.

Prayer is key to reaching the unchurched

IN NEED

CHILDREN



By Pastor Gerald Gettis

We believe God wants us here. That's why our congregation prayed before we even came to this area in Mesa, Ariz., that He would help us reach out to our neighbors. And that's why we believe He opened the first doors of opportunity.

The members of Calvary Free Lutheran began, along with a local school, to minister to people who needed food and clothing in the same area where we had acquired land and planned to build a church. Because we ministered to the area before we built, the Lord helped us get a good name before we had our first service. The school in our new neighborhood has fully supported us because the administrators know that we are here to minister and serve. We are now praying for the local high school's principal and his staff, and we are seeing our Lord bring people in to our church.

We believe that our Lord is giving us unchurched children because we are asking Him to do so. Recently, we were given a map of our neighborhood that has all of the streets named within a mile of our church. After seven days of praying over the map, the Lord sent seven new unchurched children to our Sunday school. The joy of the Lord radiates on the faces of those who had been praying for this miracle. We received because we asked.

We are blessed to have so many examples of God's faithfulness to our prayers.

When AFLBS' Barnabas team was here with us this summer, our congregation prayed, "Lord, bring in children who do not know Jesus." We saw a number of children make first-time commitments this year, and they are still growing in our Lord. This causes our hearts to rejoice. At least five of these children did not know the Lord. As we follow up with them, we are learning that He is blessing them.

Recently, a lady came to our church for food. She said that her fridge was no longer working and she needed something like peanut butter for her family. We gave her some peanut butter and then watched her leave to see where she lived. Her home is just one block away from the church. After acquiring a fridge at a second-hand store at half price, five church members went over to the lady's house and installed it. One member invited her to church. The next day she

was in church with her unsaved daughter, bringing a note of appreciation. A week later her husband was with her, too, and all of our young families took them out to lunch.

It is so exciting to see children coming to Jesus. One 5-year-old girl, who learned from Revelations 3:20 that she has a "door to her heart," invited Jesus into her life. She went home and, without prompting to share her faith, told her 10-year-old brother that he has a door on his heart and he could invite Jesus into his life just as she did.

There are many children just waiting for you to come and tell them about Jesus. It could be the greatest harvest field before us today. In our congregation we are seeing that this is most certainly true.

The list of answered prayers in our Mesa neighborhood could go on and on. We want to thank every one of you who have been praying for us, and we want you to know that there are already many children whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life because of your prayers.

What does the future hold for this wonderful group of praying warriors at Calvary? Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us ..." That is what we are seeing in our congregation. God is going way beyond what any one of us could possibly even ask or think. He gets all the glory, yet we have the joy of seeing Him do a new work in our lives.

We believe with all our hearts that it is time to ask God to forgive us for our insufficient love for children. Maybe you need to ask Jesus to forgive you and give you a new love for children.

Gettis is pastor of Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz. After completing a remodeling project with the help of volunteers throughout the AFLC, the congregation had its first service in the new sanctuary in February.

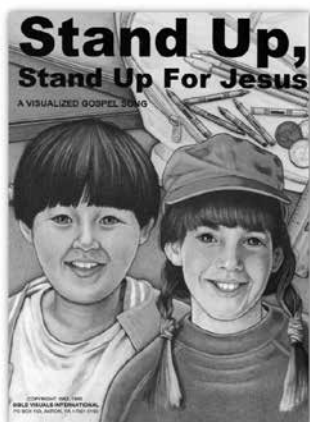
There are many children just waiting for you to come and tell them about Jesus.

Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

VISUALIZED
SONG

Colorful illustrations help teach children the important Bible truths of this hymn. \$7

Other illustrated songs available include: Great Is Thy Faithfulness, The Light of the World Is Jesus, I Love to Tell the Story, Jesus Loves Even Me, Nothing But the Blood of Jesus, O Little Town of Bethlehem, One Day, Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, Take My Life and Let It Be, To God Be the Glory, Wordless Book Song, Wounded for Me

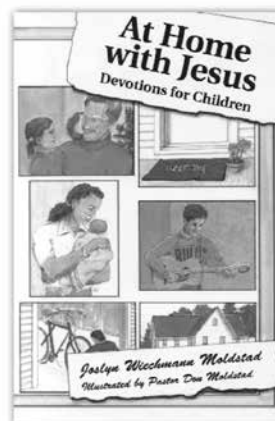


[Parish Education] Resources

At Home with Jesus

One year in the life of the Anderson family is woven into 97 devotions. Experience problems and situations with five children between the ages of 5 and 14 and find encouragement through each Christ-centered devotion presented in story form. \$11.50

For a complete listing of devotional books for all ages, contact AFLC Parish Education.



Bible Time Line

Foldout pamphlet highlights 300 key people and events in the Bible and compares Bible history, world history, and Middle East history from Genesis to Revelation, 2200 B.C.-A.D. 100. \$3.95

Other pamphlets or wall charts:

100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus, Bible Overview, Christianity, Cults & World Religions*, Feasts and Holidays of the Bible, How We Got the Bible*, Names of God, The Statue in the Book of Daniel, The Trinity, The Twelve Disciples

* Powerpoint also available

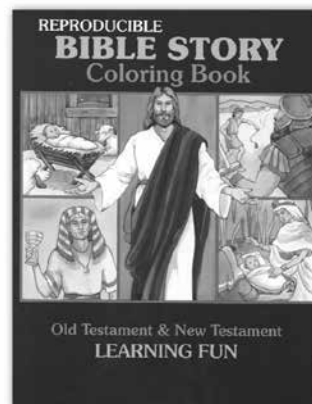


Good News for Kids

52 Gospel talks for children use simple objects or visuals with a devotional message and thought-provoking questions to teach Bible truths. Three books available in the series (Book A, B, or C). \$8 each

Bible Story Coloring Book

192 reproducible illustrations with story text help young children learn Old and New Testament Bible stories. \$9



These and other resources available from Ambassador Publications: AFLC Parish Education, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 545-5631 Fax: (763) 545-0079 Email: parished@aflc.org Web site: www.aflc.org



Unforgettable

By Rodney Kjersten

The pastor takes the infant in his arms and holds him over the baptismal font. As the water is sprinkled over the infant's forehead, he says these words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The infant is returned to the parents; they leave the church. Daily life resumes. The act fades in memory — the words forgettable.

He stands at the altar. He's a teenager now; he may have even shaved for the first time. The words of the catechism have been memorized; he affirms the questions with his pledge, "I do." He leaves the church; the pledge becomes repressed — forgettable.

He stands again at the altar. To the questions, "Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?" he answers, "I do." Life begins together. Life continues. The words and feelings of the moment become overwhelmed by time — forgettable.

School, military service, career and family life crowd together, turning the words, the pledges into memories oft forgotten. Through the events of life, the new baby, an illness, a fear, a death, he is reminded, though briefly. Throughout the accident of life they are distant — forgettable.

A hot, sultry afternoon, a dark cloud. In a brief moment of time the heritage of four generations lies in ruins; a victim of nature's might in a tornado. Reminders of people, events, activities and words said in sincerity lie scattered. In the clean up they are gathered, burned and buried. The memories pale — forgettable.

A rainy day, a fight against nature, a burned out sump pump. In 24 hours the fruit of 20 years of labor and accumulation floats about, destroyed. Time passes. Damage is repaired. Possessions are replaced. The flood becomes a memory — forgettable.

An extended negative stock market shrinks a lifetime of savings by half or more. The market returns, bringing renewed hope of wealth. The fear of loss is distant — forgettable.

A loved one is gone. I stand at the graveside in sorrow, feeling as though I can never forget. Sand is poured on the casket in the shape of a cross; the words, "from dust to dust" are spoken. Before the casket is lowered, the sand is blown away. The bare clay of the fresh grave gives way to grass, then sod. The pain of grief fades in memory — forgettable.

A tiny infant lay between life and death, struggling for life. Through the miracle of life, she now is a normal child. Memories of a victorious struggle wither — forgettable.

Today I kneel at the altar. I take the wafer and hear the words, "This is my body, given for you." I take the cup. As I drink, I hear the words, "This is my blood shed for you." I am reminded once more that although all things around me are forgettable, yet to

*Him who received me in
baptism, who died
that I might live, I
am unforgettable.*

Long-term ministry

As a licensed nursing home administrator I have worked in proprietary facilities, facilities that are owned by for-profit organizations, and not-for-profit facilities owned by church-based and benevolent organizations. On the whole, the care and conditions in either is comparable. More important is the vision and leadership qualities of the home's administrator and department heads.

Misconceptions

Probably the greatest misconception about nursing homes is that the long-term care industry is engaged primarily in health care. It is not! Long-

term care is primarily a provider of housing and services for the residents. Nursing care is only a part of those services.

A second misconception is that seniors are placed in nursing homes to die. Just the opposite is true. Seniors are placed in nursing homes because

they need assistance with the activities of daily living — bathing, dressing, toileting, eating, etc. The intent is that seniors live life as completely and fully as possible.

Ministry needs

Unfortunately, many families, some with good reasons but many with no excuse, place mom or dad in a nursing home and never return to visit. In the home in Carbondale, Ill., where I was administrator there was a male resident who had not had a family visit, not even family contact, in the three years he lived there.

Even worse, many pastors decline to make nursing home visits. There has been no funeral or interment, yet these shepherds act as if their church member had already passed away.

Some pastors, and most people, assume that nursing homes have a chaplain or some type of trained staff person to provide pastoral care. Overwhelmingly, most nursing homes do not. With cuts in Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement formulas,

chaplaincy/pastoral care positions tend not to be filled. There are exceptions, of course, but very few.

Finally, just as there is a large percentage of people in our society who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior, nursing home residents reflect the society from which they came. And just as in the society at large, many nursing home residents do not know Jesus Christ, but are eager to hear the Word.

What is involved?

Ministry in long-term care facilities provides abundant opportunities to tell the good news of God's love, mercy, and grace through Jesus Christ. It is a mission field no different than mission efforts in foreign countries or the inner cities of our own country.

Our congregation at Gloria Dei in St. Louis, Mo., conducts an afternoon worship service at a nearby nursing home the first Sunday of each month. While we follow an abbreviated form of the Lutheran liturgy, we have residents of all denominations who attend.

Sharing God's love goes beyond a worship service, however. It is exhibited and shared by our love for that person. A great way of doing that is to volunteer with a nursing home's activity department. Offers are welcome as there are never enough hands to help.

Some families adopt a resident who has no family in the immediate area. Visiting a resident once a week, remembering their birthday, and dropping by on holidays boosts the resident's spirits and gives one the chance to talk about the true meaning of the holiday.

If you feel equipped, leading a midweek Bible study not only shares God's Word, but creates an activity in which residents can participate.

A singing choir, adult or youth, or almost any type of music can be scheduled through the activity director. Luther was right when he said, "The devil flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God."

Ministry in long-term care doesn't take much effort. And seldom will so little effort be so much appreciated.

Herr, pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Louis, Mo., is a member of the American College of Health Care Administrators, Missouri Association for Homes and Services for the Aging, Missouri Elder Care Collation, and a board member of Good Samaritan Services for the Homeless.

“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God” (Leviticus 19:32, NIV).

Youth Leadership camp



Pastor Mark Antal leads a small group Bible study during the leadership camp July 12-16 at the ARC in Osceola, Wis.



Louis Norell and Nick Wright practice starting a conversation about God.



Alyssa Berrie Anne sits in on a morning session led by Pastor Kevin Olson.



Ben Schmitke and Heath Marvel practice sharing their faith without starting an argument. On Friday, they took that knowledge to the streets.



Deb Watson, Byron, Minn., spends time in personal devotions in the morning before joining the rest of the campers in a group session.

Brazil's new horizons

**“... He guides me
in paths
of righteousness
for His name sake.
Even though I walk
through the valley
of the shadow of
death, I will fear no
evil, for You are
with me; Your rod
and your staff, they
comfort me.”
— Psalm 23:3**

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by since we came on furlough to the U.S. after five years on the mission field in Brazil. It has been a very good furlough as we achieved many of our goals, had time to visit with friends and family, sat under some good teaching, read some good books and were refreshed in preparation for the new task ahead of us.

During our time in the States we faced an interesting challenge concerning our future place of work in Brazil and discerned what God's will is for us. In Acts 16:6-10 is the story of the Apostle Paul having the Macedonian vision. The Bible says that Paul had tried to go north, east, and south, but the Holy Spirit would not let him go in any of these directions. Finally,



Bekah Watson

in a dream he saw the man from Macedonia calling him west, and that is where Paul went. While on furlough we got four calls from different areas of Brazil to work in — all of them in need of help. The challenge was to discern where the Spirit of God would have us go to. The decision was made to go to a city called Maringa, 50 miles from our headquarters in Campo Mourao, to plant a new church. It also was confirmed by the approval of both the missionaries and the Brazilian National Church. So we look forward with great anticipation to the new task that lies before us.

We are also very excited to have Rebekah Watson join us for the first nine months of this new ministry. Bekah, a graduate from our AFLBS and MTI programs, is from Byron, Minn. She spent last spring ministering in Poland and this summer working with Cornerstone, one of AFLBS' teams ministering in many of our churches and Bible camps. She is a person with a real heart for God and His work. She loves missions and kids, and I believe that she is going to be a real asset to our ministry. Please keep her in your prayers. She will need them just as much as we do.

We want to thank all the churches that invited us to minister to them, and we apologize to the churches that we were not able to get to. Hopefully, we will meet soon. We want to thank those of you who have opened your homes to host us as we visited your churches. We truly have enjoyed your fellowship and want you to know that you have blessed our lives.

With regards to all, we ask that you do not forget us as we return to the field, but that you would continue to uphold us in prayer and with your financial support as we cannot do the work God has called us to do without you. You are a vital part to the success of our ministry.

Thank you for holding up the torch of God's love for the nations and don't get discouraged, because God is still doing and will always continue to do great and mighty things through His church for His Glory. Amen!

Take action

[WMF]

It was the early 1960s and I was a high school student. It was a time of social unrest with tried and true traditions challenged and changed. During study hall we were usually allowed to work quietly on whatever we wished so long as we didn't disturb other students.

Since I had recently experienced a spiritual awakening and the Holy Spirit was stirring relentlessly in my soul, I took my Bible to school, opened it and began reading during study hall. To my surprise, a frowning teacher asked me to put my Bible away and study. I had already completed my homework assignments but I complied, never having forgotten his request, unusual as it seemed at the time.

Today this teacher's request would not be considered unusual. More and more the misleading idea of "separation of church and state" is infringing on the rights of today's Christians. In many instances students are not allowed to pray or even mention the name of Jesus during school hours.

It is my understanding, however, that Bible clubs may be established after school hours. AFLC women (WMF) can promote the study of God's Word among young women of today by encouraging them to organize an after school Bible club. Search for information regarding the rules of establishing clubs in your local school district and advise the teens so they follow the guidelines.

Order newly published Bible study: I and II Samuel

The WMF has an excellent Bible study on the books of I and II Samuel available in November. Written by Joanne Segerdahl and Mary Clark, both of Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa.,



Joanne Segerdahl

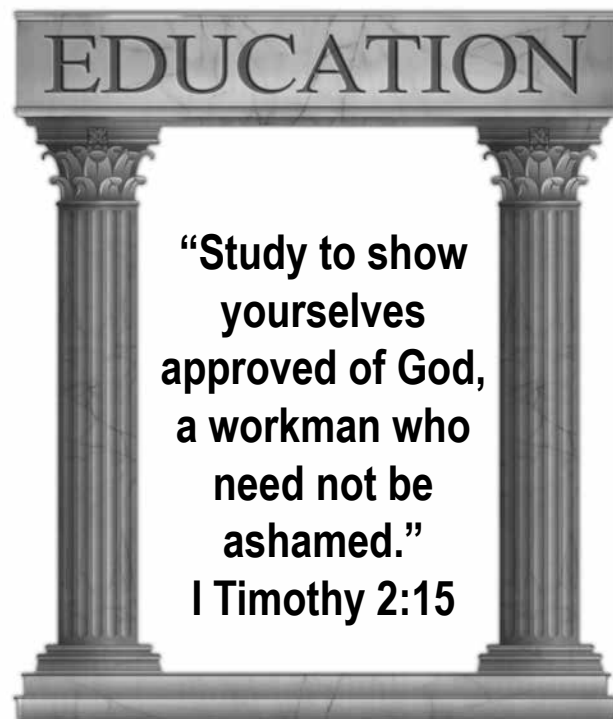


Mary Clark

the guide's users will learn about several of the great heroes of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, people who abused their positions of leadership and the resulting consequences. Resonating throughout the year will be the stories of defeat and victory, of sin, repentance, and restoration through the lives of the three main characters: Samuel, Saul, and David.

Learn about Hannah who vowed to give Samuel to the Lord before he was conceived, the friendship between David and Jonathan, and the difficulties God allowed in each person's life to prepare them to serve Him. Learn, also, about what it's like to live as a hunted fugitive, to be stripped of everything, to choose God's way even when that may be difficult. Discuss what to do when tempted to take matters into your own hands and hurry God's plan. And be brought to a greater understanding of the message of the prophets that led to the coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Order this study guide for students of the Bible of every age from teens to older adults. Call Sharon Borg at (612) 840-9686, email at wmf@aflc.org or write to 17259 79th Place N., Maple Grove, MN 55311. Place your order before Oct. 31. Cost is: one to four copies — \$6 each; five or more — \$5 each. US postage is included in this price. Make checks payable to WMF of AFLC.



**"Study to show
yourselves
approved of God,
a workman who
need not be
ashamed."
I Timothy 2:15**

— Cheryl Skordahl
National WMF President

Peace Lutheran Church members reclaimed former church building

Peace Lutheran Church is a shoot from the original Lutheran congregation that began meeting in 1839 in the village of Canal Winchester. At the time, it was comprised of mostly German, but also some Scandinavian Lutherans. The Lutheran congregation joined resources in that year with a German Reformed congregation to build a common church building.

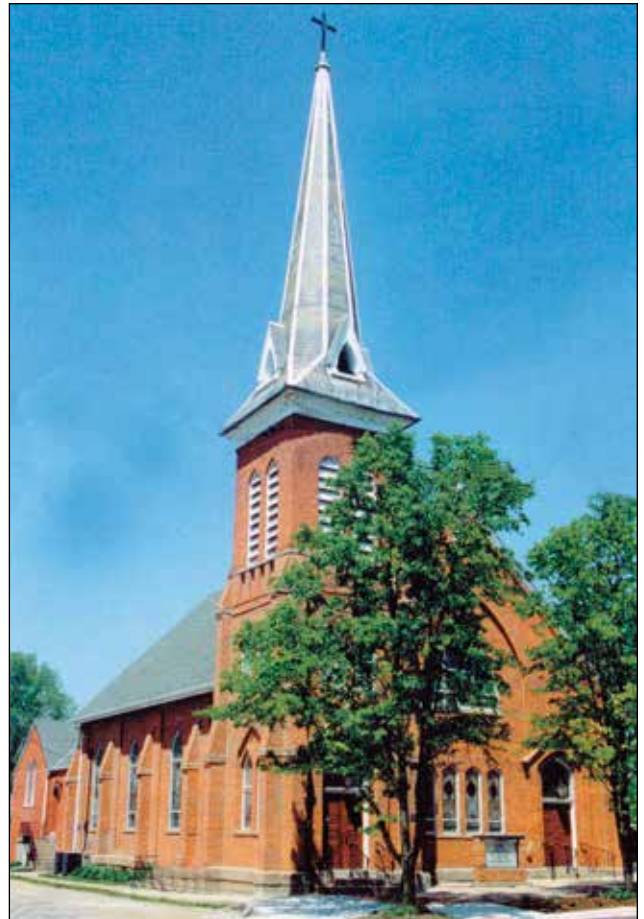
In 1881, the Lutherans sold their half of the original church property to the Reformed congregation and built our present building on the corner of Elm and Mound streets. The Lutheran congregation worshiped continuously in this building until 1975, when they relocated into a new and larger facility built about a mile away. The 1881 church building was then sold to a Baptist congregation.

The church history records doctrinal and personal disagreements developing within the congregation as early as 1961. In 1984, 11 people met to consider the formation of a new Lutheran congregation in the Canal Winchester area. The first worship service of Peace Lutheran

was held on Jan. 6, 1985, at the Bloom Elementary School, Lithopolis, Ohio. On Jan. 30, 1985, this congregation was incorporated as Peace Lutheran Church, an independent Lutheran congregation. In April 1985 Pastor Frederick Klopfer was called as the first pastor.

Providentially, by 1985, the Baptist congregation was relocating to a new building, making the original Lutheran building, built in 1881, available. Peace Lutheran congregation purchased this building in 1985. For many in the congregation, they were returning home.

Peace Lutheran Church continues as an orthodox and Bible-believing Lutheran congregation to this day. Pastor David R. Barnhart was



Peace Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio, joined the AFLC earlier this year.

called in 2002. In May 2004 the congregation (numbering about 230) voted unanimously to join the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.



New members were recently accepted at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Virginia, Minn. Pictured are: Marcy Zallar; Ed and Deb LanFranchi; Ed and Darlene Salo; Damon, Kim, Alexandra and Natalie Fultz; Sean, Jill and Toby Johnson; Lorraine Turnham and Pastor Donald Norr.



New members were recently accepted at Grace Free Lutheran, DeKalb, Ill. Pictured are, front row: Steve, Mary, Jennifer and Kathryn Lavoie. Back row: John and Char Marx, Gloria and Clifford Hatland, Pastor Kent Sperry, Carol Hollingsworth and Emily Egeland.

AFLTS hosts Summer Institute

My first impression of the Summer Institute of Theology was made two years before I came here. At that time, the council president of the ELCA church where I was the pastor brought home video tapes of a class Dr. Francis Monseth taught. I watched it with tears in my eyes because each session started with singing God's praises and prayers. Each session was strongly biblically based. I said to my wife, "This is the way I thought seminary was supposed to be!" My experience here this year has shown this to be abundantly true in every class. It is a huge blessing to learn in this environment.

— Pastor Kris Nyman
Prince of Peace Lutheran
Beulah, N.D.



More than 70 students registered for the Free Lutheran Seminary's Summer Institute of Theology. Held for the first time in Heritage Hall, students spent Aug. 2-6 studying "Themes in Exodus" under Pastor Phil Haugen, "The Doctrine of Christ" under Dr. Francis Monseth, "Studies in Corinthians" under Pastor Jerry Moan, and "New Age and the Occult" under Dr. John Eidsmoe who filled in at the last minute.



AFLC schools landscaping project

Several FLAPS work groups converged on the AFLC school's campus this summer to complete work projects in the dorms, chapel building, the student center and landscaping. At left, a volunteer cuts sod as it is being laid behind the student center. Above, Pastor Art Bolstad and his daughter, Karis, of St. Louis, Mo., work to place sod outside Heritage Hall.

Large-print hymnal now available for \$14

"Hymns of Faith and Promise," a large-print hymnal printed by the Department of Chaplaincy, is now available. The hymnbook includes 205 songs (words only) from the Ambassador Hymnal as well as worship service liturgy. Two versions are available, either a soft-cover spiral ring or a loose-leaf, three-ring binder for worship leaders. Both cost \$14 each. Proceeds from the sale of the hymnal will fund chaplaincy programs.



For more information and to order copies of the hymnbook, contact Bea Anderson with Ambassador Hymnal sales at (763) 545-5631, or write to 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

[ABCDEFGG]

What does it mean?

AFLC: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, a fellowship of independent congregations, who have chosen to be interdependent for the purpose of accomplishing service in the Kingdom of God that cannot best be done alone. Founded in 1962 with headquarters at Plymouth, Minn.

AFLBS: The Association Free Lutheran Bible School, a two-year Bible school founded in 1966 by the AFLC with campus located in Plymouth, Minn.

AFLTS: The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary sometimes called the Free Lutheran Seminary (FLS). Founded in 1964, shares campus with AFLBS in Plymouth, Minn.

WMF: The Women's Missionary Federation was organized in 1962 and supports AFLC missionary endeavors.

AFLC memorials — July

AFLBS

Steve Brinkman, Michelle Klinkel, Michael R. Anderson, Marie Olson, Arnold Vaa, Adeline Maki, Loretta Lee, Marian Will, Myrtis Flaten

AFLTS

Betty Miller, Norris Fugleberg, Arnold Viland, Emma Lucken, Myrtle Tungseth, Michael R. Anderson, Marie Olson

FLAPS

Michelle Klinkel

Home Missions

David Anderson, Jan Fatland, Gertie Olson, Helen Gronseth, Jean Paczkowski

Miriam Infant Home

Blanche Hanson

Parish Education

Lillian Peterson, Gertie Olson,

Mary Lindquist, Alvin Nordvold

Vision 2004

Peggy Saure, Ed Michaels, Bobby Ostermann, Gertie Olson, Blanche Evenson

WMF

Gertie Olson, Louise Hogstad, Lyla Schmidt, Louise Steele, Lenora Harrod, Virginia Mastad

World Missions

Peggy Saure

Youth Ministries

Donald Everson

... in honor of

AFLTS

Ed Monke, Pastor Brent Olson

Parish Education

Immanuel Lutheran, Zap, N.D.

People and Places

Dr. Richard P. Frederick was appointed professor of biblical and leadership studies at Agape College, Little Rock, Ark. Frederick will also teach in the diploma program in biblical studies.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (7 months) – January 1 - July 31, 2004

| FUND | TOTAL Subsidy | REC'D IN JULY | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | % TOTAL |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------|
| General Fund | \$288,771 | \$25,333 | \$174,185 | 60 |
| Youth Ministries . . . | 54,024 | 2,348 | 36,369 | 67 |
| Parish Education . . . | 82,062 | 7,990 | 48,700 | 59 |
| Seminary | 154,195 | 11,700 | 123,660 | 80 |
| Bible School | 264,089 | 41,053 | 193,212 | 73 |
| Home Missions | 287,115 | 21,332 | 139,305 | 49 |
| Church Extension . . . | 24,576 | 2,554 | 9,973 | 41 |
| World Missions | 256,326 | 11,770 | 125,580 | 49 |
| Personal Support . . . | 328,311 | 30,250 | 210,615 | 64 |
| TOTALS | \$1,739,469 | \$154,330 | \$1,061,598 | 61 |
| TOTALS 2003 | \$1,740,325 | \$145,505 | \$909,092 | 52 |

Goal 58%

The Evangelism Department received \$5,278 in July.

The office of director of Development received \$25 in July.

Christian education FOR EVERYONE

[Editorial]

When the congregation that I'm a part of began in 1890, services were in Norwegian. That was the proper thing to do then in this neighborhood of Norwegian immigrants. But as time went on and English became the common language, the congregation switched to English services. They didn't have the attitude that everyone should learn Norwegian. They didn't want to limit their outreach only to those who spoke Norwegian. Instead they taught the Word of God in the language the people of the neighborhood understood the best. They didn't change the message but they made some changes in the way they shared it. They adapted to changes in the community.



Craig Johnson

Some years ago a lot of our neighborhoods were made up of homes with a dad and a mom and some kids. The parents were interested in having their kids go to Sunday school and felt it was their responsibility to get them there. They themselves had some familiarity with the Bible and church and they wanted to share that with their children.

Few neighborhoods probably were as wonderful as some people remember them to be. Sin isn't a recent invention. Change has happened, however, in our communities and we need to consider that as we think about how to reach them and teach them the Word of God.

I've been living in the neigh-

borhood I'm in for five years now. I'm quickly becoming one of the "old-timers." There are rental units nearby and people come and go. The Bible says, "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14, NIV). The truth of that Scripture is all the more obvious in this society where neighbors appear for a while but then soon move on.

As we consider that it should give a heightened sense of urgency to our outreach. That neighbor may be nearby for only a short time. Do not delay in extending a greeting, showing the love of Christ and offering an invitation.

Some of my neighbors have had kids that I've invited to Sunday school. The problem in some homes has been that the kids are with their dad on the weekends. Because of the shortness of time it's possible nobody from a local congregation in the community where they are on the weekends may ever develop a relationship with them and invite them to Sunday school. When are they going to hear the good news of Jesus?

We need to look for other times during the week to reach kids and teach them the Word of God. Just because they won't be able to come to Sunday school doesn't mean we give up. We need to pray for God to open up other opportunities when we can share Jesus with them.

In our midweek after-school club we have given Bibles to kids who say they have no Bible in their home. Those of us who grew up in homes with numerous copies of the Bible may find that difficult to believe, but that's the world we live in. Some kids and youths, and an

We need to look
for other times
during the week
to reach kids and
teach them the
Word of God.

increasing number of adults, have never been exposed to the truths of God's Word. There are no Bible stories or passages that are familiar to them. They have never heard that song that we assume everybody knows.

As we seek to train them in God's Word, it's important we recognize the need to start with the basics. For a lot of the folks in our neighborhoods, it's all new. If we assume they know things that they don't, it may cause them to be lost and confused. They may feel out of place and not interested in coming back.

Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ... teaching them" (Matthew 28:19, 20). We don't wait for the ones who are like us to wander in our buildings. We don't teach them only if they fit our mold. We go to all the nations. We go to our lost and hurting neighbors who have no knowledge of Christ. We go with the wonderful, relevant and life-changing message of Jesus.

[Something to Share]

By Karen Floan

The **HEART** of Christian education

Christian Education. What is it? The term is most times associated with private schooling, home school associations and specific settings of Christian teaching. But I believe the definition of Christian education is much more encompassing. It really is educating Christians.

How does educating Christians begin? In Deuteronomy 6 we are admonished to first begin teaching our children and families diligently in our homes. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when

you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

You may not feel qualified to teach Sunday school, but there are many other ways to teach.

We can teach in our homes, churches, and communities by following Jesus' example.

How do we begin to do this overwhelming task? We can look at Jesus' example with His disciples. As Jesus talked

and walked with His disciples daily, explaining His teachings to them, He did things the disciples could actually see and practice themselves. Like Jesus, we need to show our children how to serve, show love, work hard as unto the Lord, be kind and gentle, and be faithful servants of Christ.

This takes time and energy. That's why Isaiah 40:11 are such a comfort: "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." And Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their

strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Educating Christians in our home is the starting point. But Jesus gave us a bigger picture in Matthew 28:20 with the Great Commission; "... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

In the verses preceding this, we are admonished to go and make disciples of all nations. Then we are to teach them. This is not a short-term job. We are to continue doing this until the end of the age, or, in other words, all of our lives. I'm sure you've heard individuals in the church say, "I'm retiring from teaching Sunday school, it's someone else's turn." Or, "Teaching is not my gift."

The Great Commission calls each of us to continue teaching until the end of the age. You may not feel qualified to teach Sunday school, but there are many other ways to teach. We can teach in our homes, churches, and communities by following Jesus' example. We may feel overwhelmed, discouraged and even tired. That's why verses like II Thessalonians 3:13 and Galatians 6:9 encourage us to keep on.

What a blessing to have opportunities for Christian education in our homes, churches, communities and the world. What a blessing to be a part the AFLC where the Word of God is being taught in truth. How exciting it is to have a Bible school and a seminary that are training and equipping individuals to carry out the Great Commission to share Christ and educate Christians. Praise the Lord for these opportunities! Let's be faithful to teach.

Floan, who works for Vision 2004, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.