



ot all things in life are mountaintop experiences. At least that's one thing that was impressed upon my heart during our recent visit to the Czech Republic. While preparing for our upcoming mission trip in Poland, my husband, Andy, and I were able

to visit friends in the city of Trinec, which is near the Czech-Polish border.

We were blessed to have been able to join Pastor Michal Klus and his youth group from the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession for an excursion in the great outdoors. The day began with an early start, and with the morning sun beaming through the trees we departed for the top of a nearby peak in the Beskydy Mountains.

Several hours later, we reached the top and gazed at the beauty of creation. We shared in food, fellowship and encouragement from God's Word. Worshipping together, the beautiful praises in Czech must have surely reached heaven's gates. But something even more strikingly beautiful touched my heart in a new way that day: young people were praising God openly on the very soil that had formerly been a secret church.

During the Counter-Reformation in the later part of the 16th century, Protestant churches were shut down and converted to serve the interests of the Orthodox Church. Many Lutherans were persecuted for their beliefs, but that persecution only served to fan the flame of their faith.

During our time in Trinec, some special friends of ours gave us a lesson in the Church history of the region of Silesia, one that we will not forget. We visited beautiful churches dating back to the Reformation period that

were originally Lutheran churches. Nestled up in the mountains, they gave testimony to the faith of those long before us.

However, what we didn't see was perhaps even more telling of their determined faith in the midst of persecution. We learned that deep inside the forest, Christians secretly met to worship God together. In spite of the hardships they faced, they were determined to worship their Creator and Savior.

As an American who has taken for granted the freedom of religion, I learned a new appreciation that day for the freedom to worship God openly. How often I have attended worship and spoken of my faith in public without stopping to realize what a blessing that freedom is.

Learning of the history of the believers in this culture, my heart was encouraged. Those Christians stood firm in the face of opposition and were determined to pass on their heritage of faith. Now, so many generations later and after more persecution, young Christians enjoy the freedom to praise the name of the Lord. It is my hope that they are strengthened to keep declaring His glory.

Psalm 71:17-18 says, "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds ... do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation." May we not take our precious freedom for granted, and may we be faithful to carry on the heritage of faith, whether freely on the mountain tops or in the face of persecution.

> — Monica Coyle East European Missions Network

September 2005 Volume 43, Number 9



#### **<b>ELUTHERANAMBASSADOR**

Editor

Pastor Craig Johnson craigi@teleport.com

**Managing Editor** 

**Editorial Board** 

Ruth Gunderson ruthg@aflc.org

Pastor John Mundfrom Oryen Benrud Pastor Jerry Moan Pastor James L. Johnson

The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 545-5631; fax: 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine

Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org

**Subscriptions rates:** 

\$15 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441

#### **Sound Bites**

From the 2005 Free Lutheran Youth Convention July 4-9, Estes Park, Colo.

Jesus is not an illusion. He is who He said He is. — Toby Travis

> This holy God, in His love and compassion, sent One to rescue us. — Pastor Phil Haugen Senior high Bible study

Illusionist

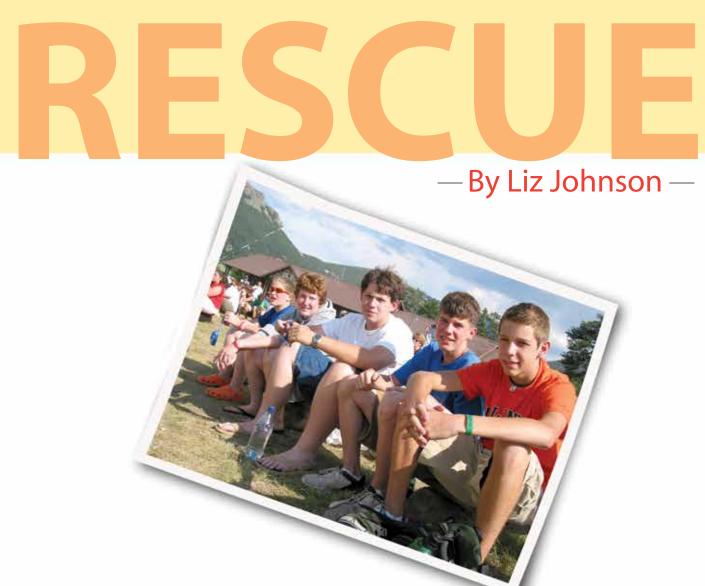
Be a family rescuer ... Stop blaming ... Stop taking and start giving. Pastor James L. Johnson Evening speaker

Many students. Many staff. Many speakers. One message. Jesus still saves souls.

> — Pastor Jason Holt Outgoing FLY president



I needed that week. I've attended countless Bible camps and have only missed one **FLY** convention since was born. I'm used to Christian camps. I know what to expect from them.



# RESCUE FLY '05

#### It's not easy to defend what you believe in.

### Observations from a camper

There were daily devotions with our youth group after breakfast in the morning, in which we had a Bible study every day. There were also devotions in our cabins before bed. One night, we even shared our testimonies, and it was interesting to see the different ways the Lord has influenced our lives.



Karishma Chainani Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.

've grown accustomed to watching people around me experience the week-long spiritual high, and I'm never surprised to see it fade back into bland and timid Christianity. It's always bothered me more than it probably should. I think that's

than it probably should. I think that's maybe why I never let Christ dramatically impact my life during camps. I could never stand watching people become radical Christians during camp and the day after the bus ride home go right back to how they used to be. I never wanted that to be me. So I think I just stopped listening and didn't let myself become affected at all by the week and the message. FLY 2005 was different.

After years of home schooling, this was my first year at a public school. And I got a job. My life shifted from revolving around Christian events and activities to constantly being with non-Christians. I've never really understood what it was like to witness before this year ... it's hard. It's hard to defend what you believe in. It's hard to have people disagree with you on every topic concerning faith. It's hard being thrown outside the Christian bubble I was so comfortable living inside of.

I love it. I love a challenge, and this year was incredible. But I needed to be refreshed and encouraged. I needed to be rescued.

I asked God to make this FLY different for me. It's crazy how different it was.

There's something about standing in a hot, crowded room with 1,600 other people worshipping, and it made a huge impact on me. Right away, God answered so many of the prayers that I had just for that week. Just being in the presence of others who are experiencing the awesomeness of Christ is so extremely encouraging. I needed a break from all the junk that became totally normal to me this year. I needed rescue. One thing I specifically felt God telling me that week was to give it all to Him — to dump all my problems on Him, give Him my worries, to let Him handle each moment of my high school career, to trust Him completely.

I'll never be able to make it on my own. So, this year I let myself be affected. Just letting go that week was so healthy for me. I came back home feeling so much more nourished than before. I don't want to see the strength that God gave me that week be lost. I don't want to become one of those people who have the mountaintop camp experience but come home unchanged.

I left my wristband on for a while after camp and went to work with it on. During my break a guy who works with me said, "Rescue FLY '05? What's that?" I told him that it was the camp I was at the week before. He looked at me with a smirk on his face and said, "It wasn't a church camp was it?" I was being jerked right back into reality. I told him about FLY and how I love it and look forward to it all year. He was cynical at first but lightened up after a little bit. Now I get teased a little for being the "church camp girl" — nothing serious, but it's one of those things that I know I would be too tired to stick up for if I hadn't let God refresh me that week.

Four days after I left Colorado I went to a Christian music festival, Sonshine, in Willmar, Minn. On Thursday night the Newsboys performed. It was





blazing hot, smelled like sweat and was unbelievably packed with swarms of people. But the focus was on one person: Christ. Thousands of hands were raised in the air, and everyone was singing, almost screaming, praises to Him. It was like being at FLY all over again.

Now I'm back. FLY is over, Sonshine is over, and I'm getting back into the swing of things at home. I have to face the fact that there's not always going to be hundreds of people right beside me, supporting my beliefs and glorifying the same God with me. I know that every believer will face adversity, will be disliked because of their convictions and will be teased because of their standards. But I know that the mountaintop experience doesn't have to descend back into lukewarm Christianity. Christ will continue to consume you and strengthen you if you give it all to Him.

The verses that stuck out to me during the convention — and what God continues to encourage me through are Isaiah 40:29-31, "He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted; 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."

God will never let me wear out spiritually if I give my whole life to Him and let Him do whatever He wants with me. I need to trust Him completely and let Him remind me that He knows what He's doing.

It seems easy to live the life Christ wants me to live while I'm at FLY. It's going to be simple for me to be blatantly and unabashedly in love with Jesus on Sunday mornings at church, or at youth group and on church retreats. But I want to be passionate about Christ when it's tough. Sold-out believers should truly desire Christ to invade their lives and be shining through their lives constantly even if they get teased or laughed at.

Yesterday I was talking to a friend about my summer. He pointed out that so far pretty much every big event I've attended this summer has been Christian. My first instinct was to change the subject — I wanted to avoid looking like a loser. But that's all wrong. So I walked right into it. I told him about how I love going to Bible camps because I love Jesus and I love being with other people who love Him, too. I didn't know what my friend was going to say, but it surprised me when he said, "I love that about you, Liz. It's really cool that you're not embarrassed that you're super religious." Christ pulled me through on that one. He'll pull me through every time. If I give my whole self to Him and stop thinking about what I want for myself, He'll take over. He'll make my life so much more exciting than what I could ever make it to be on my own.



Johnson, who will be a junior this year in high school, is a member of Living Hope, St. Michael, Minn.





## You're not — By Sarah Tonneson —

hhh ... the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Everywhere you look, their beauty is astounding. On every side, majestic mountains surround you, showing you the awesome power of God. You are separated from the world, allowing you to focus solely on God alone. Instead of being bombarded by temptations from secular music, movies, and TV, you are given quiet moments of peace to dig deep into God's Word and to devote time to Him. Instead of listening to the sounds of a busy world, you have time to

listen to the God of the universe. It's the perfect setting for the Free Lutheran Youth Convention.

Being in such a setting is fantastic. Knowing that nearly 1,000 other youths are there with you, seeking God and finding Him, is an encouraging thought. It reminds me that I am not alone. Sometimes it's easy to think that the entire world has forsaken Christ, but when you see your peers on their knees before a holy God, that thought all but disappears.

This was my third time attending



#### You aren't the only teen facing these issues.

the FLY Convention. In years past, the convention has been more of a renewal time, a time to once again put my life right with Christ. This year, having my feet more firmly planted in Him, there was tremendous growth in my spiritual life. I found myself craving the morning Bible studies, where we dug deep into the Word of God, and desiring to find more of the buried treasures within its pages. Although every convention isn't exactly alike, one thing has remained the same throughout all of them: I've met others who are dealing with the same issues that I am. Teenagers have so many different things thrown in their faces, and as Christians, it's tough to know exactly how to respond. Should we try the dating game? What's the difference between Christianity and the other religions of the world? How do we witness in our own public school, where we are vastly outnumbered? Thankfully, I

am not the only one pondering these things.

The issue that I struggle with the most is being a strong witness for Jesus Christ in an extremely worldly public high school. It happens almost every summer. I have more free time, which means more time that I am able to spend in God's Word. I come to realize the greatness of God, and become concerned for my unsaved friends. Revelation 20:11-15 has struck me pretty hard lately. Verses 12 and 15 say, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds ... And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." It's terrifying to think of someone spending eterni-



ty in the lake of fire, a place of everlasting torment and anguish, just because I didn't have the boldness to tell them about Christ. Every summer, I'm convicted to be a better, stronger witness for Christ. But frankly, it's much easier to say that you're going to be a bold witness when you're in the midst of people sharing the same beliefs as you. At FLY, it's cool to be a Christian; but once you're back home, being a Christian makes you the subject of scorn. The boldness I acquired over the summer dims, and instead of boldly declaring Jesus, I sit back and wait until asked about what I believe.

It's quite a frustrating experience. I mean, why can't I just always be on fire for Christ? Why does the "mountain top" experience have to end? Shouldn't it be easier than this? Well, I guess Jesus didn't promise an easy life once we decided to follow Him. He said in Matthew 10:22: "You will be hated by all because of My name ..."

Amid the frustrations and confusion, there is good news. I'm not alone! Countless Christian teenagers all over America struggle with this same problem. And while they may not have all the answers, it's good to know that there is someone with whom I can identify. There is someone who understands, and is willing to lend a listening ear. There is someone who offers encouragement during lows, and shares the joys during the highs.

Even greater than having fellow Christian friends by my side is having Christ by my side. The second half of verse 22 in Matthew 10 states, "But it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." Endurance — it's tough to do on my own, but there is One who has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). As I walk the halls of Lincoln High School this fall, I won't be alone. Although it may seem like it at times, I am not the only Christian in the building or the country. And even if I were, God would be walking beside me every step of the way.



Sarah Tonneson, 17, is a member of Abiding Savior Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.



#### -By Ryan Pangman —

n the morning of July 3, 2005, I finally became a counselor. Just two years ago, as a student, I was finding out what God had to offer me. Now I had the opportunity to tell my students what God had to offer them.

On the way to the FLY convention I couldn't help but think about the first time I went to FLY. It was a wonderful

experience in my life. I first committed my life to Christ at FLY 1999. From there I grew from a little Christian seed into a deeply rooted, godly man. I went to two other FLY conventions: 2001 and 2003. Each and every time I learned something new about my Christian faith.

But being a counselor was the biggest growing experience in my life. Pastor Brian Pearson (St. Olaf Lutheran Church in Montgomery, Ill.) spoke at the

#### He got a chance to share his faith.

Wednesday night service. I remember the moment in Pastor Brian's message when he told people the importance of salvation. Just before his final point, he showed clips of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center as 1,612 campers listened. In that moment, you could have heard a pin drop in the building.

This moment gave me a chance to reflect on my life and how at anytime it can come to an end. Having salvation is the one thing I most desire in my life. To have Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Savior is all I need to have. I know that this world could never offer anything close to what God has to offer.

Before the FLY convention, I knew that God was all I needed. But it took a powerful speaker like Pastor Brian to help me fully comprehend the importance of giving my life to Jesus Christ.

In the years between being a student and returning as a counselor at FLY, I choose to devote my life to Jesus. Being a Christian didn't start at the being of the week of each FLY convention, and it didn't stop at the end of the week, either. I took everything that the convention had to offer and applied it to my life. From there it's helped me grow deeper in my faith so that I may turn around and shine my light into this dark world.

In order to really mature as a Christian, you must grow. After the spiritual high of the FLY convention, you must be devoted and be sure to grow in your faith. I found this out after FLY 1999. Though I was a Christian, I didn't fully give myself to Jesus Christ. The affect of that choice was a failure in maturity — I didn't become a godly man.

It took being in the Word. It took going to youth group and church. And then last year I went to the Association of Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) in Plymouth, Minn. My first year at AFLBS prepared me to be able to come to FLY and share Jesus Christ with students. It was awesome to return in this

role to FLY, where I began my Christian life. An event that spurred my growth into a godly man now gave me the chance to be able to tell my students what I had been taught. I could share with them during a Wednesday night afterglow. I could tell them how it felt like Jeremy Erickson was speaking right to me instead of the nearly 1,000 kids via video message. How it affected me when he said that there was more to life then we realize. That Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and Life!

On Monday night, July 4, I came straight out and asked the kids during devotions if they knew they would go to heaven if they died that night. They were unsure. I instantly took the opportunity to start sharing the gospel with them and tell them the good news of Jesus Christ. I told them that God so loved the World that He gave His only Son and whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). I pointed out that they must believe to go to heaven. How unbelief leads to hell. As I was telling them the good news, it seemed like a light bulb went on inside their brains and their eyes were so wide. They finally understood that Jesus Christ was their Rescuer. That once they give their lives to God, they have new lives. The old life has been forgotten. That Monday night four of my guys received Christ.

I praise the Lord for giving me the opportunity to tell them what the Lord had to offer. The Lord was knocking on the door to their hearts, and they let Him in. What an awesome experience to be used by God to help young men bloom into strong Christians.

Being a counselor has helped me view my life and understand what I must do each and everyday. I must reach those who don't know the Lord as their personal Savior. That's everyone's calling. Reach those who are lost in this world. Tell them the good news of Jesus Christ.



Ryan Pangman Montgomery, Ill.







# Many numbers, one Company of the second of

n event like the Free Lutheran Youth Convention can involve a lot of numbers. The total attendance was 1,612, including 998 students, 221 counselors, 133 staff, 204 adults, and 56 children. In spite of all those numbers, the convention really came down to one.

There was One who had to show up if the convention was going to have any lasting significance. That One is Jesus. He is the only one who can rescue. He is the only one who can transform lives. And He was present and working one-onone in lives.

The convention, held July 4-9 in Estes Park, Colo., offered campers a number of activities and events. The mornings began with students and counselors meeting for devotions. The students were then divided into two groups for a praise and worship and Bible study time. Large group workshops were held each morning, along with 53 electives throughout the week.

In the afternoons the students had the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of recreational activities offered at the YMCA of the Rockies, including hiking, miniature golf, volleyball, basketball, swimming and crafts. The afternoons also featured drama presentations and a talent show.

The evenings were devoted to worship. These times included contemporary music or traditional hymns of faith. Scripture was read, the Apostles' Creed was confessed, prayer times were held

















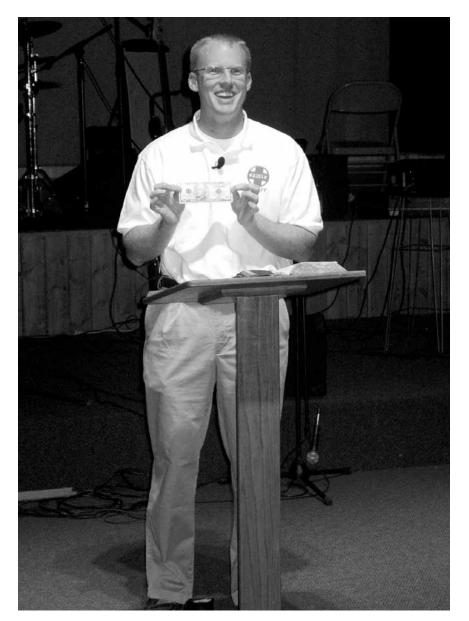
and messages — even one via video were shared as well.

Toby Travis, a Christian illusionist, used his unique talents on Monday evening to show how the world deceives, but Christ is the source of truth. On Tuesday evening, campers were encouraged to enter the worship service in silence and reflect on worshipping the Lord in reverence and awe. FLY President Pastor Jason Holt brought the message on Jesus, "the Way and the Truth and the Life." On Wednesday evening, Pastor Brian Pearson spoke on the invitation to come to God's banquet. Many students responded to the invitation and came forward, seeking to know Christ, recommit their lives to the Lord or seeking special prayer and counseling.

The men and women had separate services on Thursday evening. Pastor Nate Hoff spoke to the men on the topic of godly living. Pam Stenzel led the women that evening and the whole group Friday morning, speaking on the topic of purity in relationships. AFLC President Robert Lee shared on Friday evening and encouraged students to have more than a "mountain top" experience. Lee challenged individuals to continue in their walk with the Lord. He pointed to the ABCs — adoration, Bible, congregation — as keys to spiritual growth.

Following the worship services each evening was a time of vespers: a time to worship, reflect and share about what God had done. Videos were shown about the day's events and some included testimonies of how God had been working in people's lives.

One special video presentation featured a message from Jeremy Erickson, youth worker at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn. Jeremy has been involved in the worship and music aspect of FLY over the past years and had hoped to attend this year's convention. Cancer was recently discovered in his









body, and he has been undergoing treatment. His doctors cleared him to fly to Colorado, but during his flight he became ill and was not able to make it to Estes Park. In his video message, he reminded students of God's strength in human weakness and His power and grace that help His people through the challenges of life.

A worship team from Brazil led one evening's vespers. The 10-member team, which goes by the name Pedras Vivas (living stones), leads worship at the Central Free Lutheran Church in Campo Mourao, Brazil. Along with their time at the FLY convention, the Brazilians visited AFLC congregations in the U.S.

during their three-week trip.

A soccer match between Brazil and the U.S. was held one afternoon with Brazil coming out on top, 6-2.

A lot of numbers. A lot of variety. But the theme of the convention — Rescue applied to all. There was a lot to give thanks for, but most of all rejoicing happened because the truth of Colossians 1:13-14 was learned and applied to lives: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."



### anticipation [Free Lutheran Youth]

#### Don't overlook your next step

- By Paul Kneeland -

he hamburgers are ready! Barbequing with friends is a perfect time for reminiscing about the past, pondering the future, discussing various topics and solving all the world's problems ... now that's a fun afternoon! Our first topic: Old commercials.

Do you remember those groovy, entertaining commercials from the '70s with the catchy tunes? Of course you do! I reckon most of you could recall some memorable ones and warble out a few lines.

How about the Heinz Ketchup song? Can you picture the jumbo, juicy hamburger with the gloriously red bottle perched above it? Then you see a little boy waiting expectantly, yet slightly impatiently, as the ketchup slowly pours out of the bottle. All the while, in the background, you hear the music of the song, "Anticipation."

"Anticipaaa-yaaa-tion ... it's makin' its way ... it's keepin' me wai-ai-ai-ai-aii-ting." Yes! Now I've got you singing it, too! Anticipation. Pleasurable expecta-

The opening line to the above Carly Simon song says, "We can never know about the days to come, but we think about them anyway." We just finished unpacking from this summer's FLY Convention and I find myself already looking forward to the next one! Each convention proves to be so impactful and rewarding that one can't help but eagerly anticipate what God has in store for 2007. Of course it's too far away to know many details yet, but it's fun to think about it. The next two years will be filled with many days of planning as we count down to that event. We must not, however, in the excitement of looking ahead, forget about or neglect each day that lies before us.

The Heinz Ketchup commercial highlights the most significant quality of its product: Its thick, slow pace. In a song entitled, "Slow Dance," Jeremy Erickson writes, "You better slow down — don't dance so fast. Time is short now — the music won't ... the music won't last."

There are certainly a lot of things to look forward to and anticipate in regards to our Free Lutheran Youth. There is this winter's Youth Worker's Retreat; next summer's FLY Boot Camp; our ongoing college-age ministry; youth mission trips; youth resources and newsletters; and, of course, the 2007 FLY Convention scheduled for July 2-7. But even if we could forecast the future of all these events, we still have to live each day as it comes. Aside from our future eternity with Christ in heaven, our greatest anticipation should be for where God directs our very next step.

The book of Jeremiah records some of the history of the exiles from Judah who were taken to Babylon. Can you imagine being taken captive to a foreign land not having any idea what the future held for you? They didn't know if they would live or die or if they would ever see their homeland again. Yet God tells them to live one day at a time. In Jeremiah 29:5, He tells them to "build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." And in verse 11, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Do you have a pleasurable expectation about what your walk with Christ will be like tomorrow? Don't keep wai-ai-ai-i-ting for the next big event. Slow down and enjoy the walk one step at a time.

Well, my hamburger is ready, so I think I'll grab a Coke and start pondering the next topic: How "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony." Oh no! Here we go back to the '70s again!

Kneeland was elected as the 2007 FLY president. He serves as youth director at Abiding Savior Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

#### [World Missions]

## World Missions 3 give your When you care enough, do your best

he words of an old hymn remind us of our calling as Christians: "Give of your best to the Master." But what if your best doesn't seem too great? Jesus' requirement for all people young or old, talented or ordinary, rich or poor, Brazilian or American — is the same: give all!

Three Gospel writers include the description of Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler who considered this price too high to pay. Luke describes the reaction of this young man who turned back from following



A group leads worship during a Sunday service in the rented building in Campo Largo, Brazil.

Jesus with a simple word: he was very "sad" (18:23).

True happiness results from a willingness to give our all to Jesus. When we lay our all at the foot of the cross, Jesus' work of forgiveness, transformation and empowerment are seen in our lives.

Most Lutheran Ambassador readers know that we have been missionaries in Brazil for 20 years. We are working on our fourth church plant, this one in a city called Campo Largo. Each time we begin in a new place the task seems overwhelming. Even our all seems insignificant. That's where grace comes in and where the Holy Spirit takes over. Our faithful prayer partners and financial supporters play a big part in the invisible spiritual work that happens in the hearts of those we reach — and in our hearts as well.

The new church began as a Bible study in the home of a woman who was converted in Bateias several years ago and later moved to Campo Largo. Diva is a victim of polio and struggles to get around on crutches or in a wheelchair, yet she uses every opportunity to share Jesus with people who come to her home for prayer and counsel.

Last November a small building was rented so that we would have more room to invite people to study the Bible with us. After evangelistic meetings this March in a tent campaign, several people began attending services regularly every Tuesday and Sunday. Twelve people are attending Profession of Faith classes and learning what it means to give their *all* to Jesus.

A young couple from our Bateias congregation (Gui and Diana) moved to the city to help in the new work. The Lord also brought us another family (Paulo and Maria and their two teenage sons) from another city in our state. They have been active members in our Free Lutheran church in Londrina for years. They, too, are actively participating in our new evangelistic outreach.

We work in an area of town close to a slum. Before each service the love-starved children wait for us so they can receive hugs and attention. They need Jesus. Our rented quarters are already too small as we usually have more than 50 people each time we meet.

God knew our need before we asked. A wonderful piece of property went up for sale right across the street from our rented quarters. We started praying and God's people started responding. A VBS group in Arlington, Wash., raised \$1,204 for the purchase of the property. The congregation added another generous offering. The Primavera Project agreed to help with the purchase of the two existing buildings on the property. Another couple from Wisconsin sensed God's urging for them to be a part of the establishment of this new church. Others are praying for God's will to be done. We rest in His provision and His timing.

As we have been willing to give our *all* to Jesus, we have been astonished time and time again by His faithfulness. The words of Jesus in response to the disciples inquiry, "Who then can be saved?" (Luke 18:26) have become reality once again in our ministry: He said, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." His will is that all men would be saved. Building a church in a new place is a means by which more people will come to know Jesus.

How can you give of your best to the Master?

 Pastor Paul and Becky Abel Curitiba, Brazil



# higher perspective The 20

#### The 2006 Bible study

ave you ever had the experience of being able to rise above a scene to get the bigger picture? Think of the illustration of a frustrated motorist stuck in a traffic jam. From his view, all he can see ahead of him is a blocked roadway. His friend, however, flies in an airplane

overhead and sees the entire situation — the cause of the problem, the length of the delay, the best way out, and the final destination. The higher perspective is certainly the best!

You and I are like that driver. In the daily struggles of life, we often get bogged down in our limited view of things. We easily grow discouraged and exhausted in the stress of it all. We need God's higher perspective in our lives to give us new direction and answers to our questions. God's Word is the eternal truth that gives us that new perspective, which inspires us with new courage and hope.

The more we are in God's Word, the more we can live in victory because we see more clearly from God's eternal perspective.

"Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," (Psalm 119:105). Centuries ago, foot lamps worn on ankles shed just enough light on the path to take one step. Of course, as a person took that step, it gave enough light for one more step. Spiritually, we move ahead in that walk of faith one step at a time. God, in love, doesn't reveal our whole lives to us right now because He knows we could never take it. When we trust and obey one step at a time, we realize our constant need of depending on Him, and we find that His grace is always sufficient.

I want to invite women, young and old, to join in these practical Bible studies for 2006. The lessons deal with everyday issues we all face — first exposing the errors of worldly thinking, and then emphasizing practical application of insights in seeing life from God's point of view.

> Linda Korhonen WMF 2006 Bible study writer Cokato, Minn.

## order form

Order your 2006 Bible study books, "The Higher Perspective," written by Linda Korhonen Cost: 1-4 books: \$6 each. Five or more books: \$5 each (Cost includes postage)

Total number of books ordered:		
Ship order to:		
Address:		
City:	_ State:	Zip:
Church:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:

#### Order by Oct. 31

#### Send orders to:

Dawn Johnson 2991 30th Ave. Wilson, WI 54027 Phone: (715) 772-4454 Email: ctk@wwt.net or es@ aflcwomen.org

#### Crowell dies in airplane crash

AFLC Pastor Michael Crowell. Arlington, Wash., died July 27 when the plane he was flying near Oshkosh, Wis., crashed. He was alone in the plane.

Crowell, 48, was the founder and director of Mission Aviation Training Academy, a flight school for missionaries. He was also the associate pastor of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington.

Surviving are his wife, Lori; two sons, Jeremy, who attended AFLBS last school year, Adrian, 15; and one daughter, Melissa Herbst.

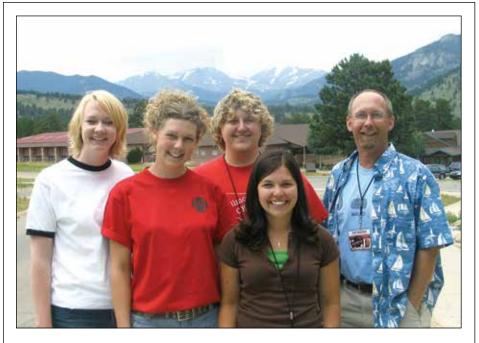
A memorial service was held July 31 at Smokey Point Community Church, Smokey Point, Wash. A graveside service was held Aug. 4.

A more complete obituary will be printed in the October issue.

#### Two congregations celebrate anniversaries

St. Peter Lutheran, Metz, Mich., turned 125 this year. Members of the church celebrated the event on July 31. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee spoke in the morning service. Pastor David Barnhart, Canal Winchester, Ohio, spoke in the afternoon service. Pastor Lee Hoops serves the congregation.

Alma Lutheran, Argyle, Minn., will celebrate 125 years of ministry with events on Oct. 1-2. The Saturday evening will be an informal time for friends to meet and share. A video of the building of the new church will be shown. At Sunday's morning worship, Pastor Ronald Qualley, a son of the congregation, will bring the message. The anniversary service will begin at 2 p.m with AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee speaking. The theme is "Forward by Grace," based on Ephesians 2:7-8. Pastor Dennis Gray serves the congregation.



#### FLY officers elected at convention

Elected to the 2007 Free Lutheran Youth committee during the July convention in Estes Park, Colo., were (from left) Michelle Satren, first vice president; Betsy Parsley, secretary; Matt Nelson, second vice president; Karisa Finstrom, devotional life secretary; and Paul Kneeland, president.



#### **Summer Institute of Theology**

There were nearly 70 men and women registered for the Summer Institute of Theology, a program offered by the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary Aug. 1-5 on the campus of the AFLC schools in Plymouth, Minn. With the theme, "Born Again to a Living Hope," the institute offered five courses throughout the week. Pastor Phil Haugen taught on Studies in I Peter, Pastor Jerry Holmaas taught on Studies in Daniel, Dr. Francis Monseth taught on The Doctrine of the Word, Jerry Nelson taught on Music and the Congregation. and Dr. John Eidsmoe taught on Theology of Law and Government.

## 10Qears

#### Church marks centennial, closes

large crowd was present June 26 for the centennial celebration of Telemarken Lutheran Church, rural Goodridge, Minn. The event also marked the closing of the church.

Pastor Elden Nelson, vice president of the AFLC, spoke at the morning worship service, using Revelation 3:8-11 as his text. An afternoon program, with the theme, "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24), gave opportunity for greetings, both oral and written. Pastor Terry Olson, president of the Northwestern District of the AFLC, spoke on behalf of neighboring churches. Telemarken's pastor, Raynard Huglen, officiated at the closing of the church, effective July 1.

The opening of the western end of the Red Lake Indian Reservation for settlement in the early part of the 20th century brought a host of Scandinavian homesteaders to the area. Many had come from Telemark, Norway, among them those who founded Telemarken. The first church was built in 1907. The present structure was built in 1919-20.

An early member of the Norwegian Synod, Telemarken held membership in several Lutheran bodies over the years. The congregation became independent in 1978 and affiliated with the AFLC in 1992. Since then, its members have been leaders in giving to AFLC benevolences.

Among many pastors and others who have led worship at Telemarken over the years, two are especially revered: Halvor Bjornson, who began the work, and E.O. Sabo, who served for 30 years from 1920 to 1950.

A declining rural population, including families with



Members of Telemarken Lutheran, rural Goodridge, Minn., celebrated the congregation's centennial anniversary in June and then closed the congregation due to a declining membership.

children, hastened the end of this congregation, but the work of the Lord goes on. The building will remain a landmark, as it is owned and maintained by a cemetery association. Two newly planted rows of Black Hills spruce trees on the north side of the church were dedicated during the closing service.

Pastor Anthony Striffler, Garden City, Kan., pastor of St. James Lutheran (AFLC), has assumed additional responsibilities in his community as a chaplain for Tyson Foods and an affiliate chaplain at St. Catherine Hospital.

**Pastor Curt Emerson,** Janesville, Wis., has accepted a call to serve as the senior pastor of Peace Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio. Pastor David Barnhart, who has been serving the congregation, will continue as the associate pastor.

Pastor Peter Ward, Vernon, British Columbia, accepted a call to serve Faith Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Ill. Ward has served Living Word, Vernon, since his ordination in 2001.

Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cam-

bridge, Minn., has accepted a call to serve as interim pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.

**Tom and Lidia Lumppio,** graduates of AFLBS and MTI and members of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., have been accepted by

Continued on page 22

World Mission Prayer League for missionary service in Mexico. They will be working together with another family in the state of Sinaloa to reach unevangelized, indigenous people groups with the gospel.

Pastor Duane Matz of Living Word Lutheran, Menasha Wis., is producing a daily weekday radio program called "Today's Living Word," airing 5:45 a.m. on WEMI 91.9 FM. The 90-second devotional is designed to teach and encourage by going through books of the Bible one verse at a time. Transcripts and an audio download of the program are available at www.livword.com.

**Dennis Norby,** a 2005 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained July 31 at Faith Lutheran, Ottawa, Ill., his home congregation. AFLC Vice President Pastor Elden Nelson officiated at the service. Norby serves as assistant pastor of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill.

Pastor Cal Willard, a 2005 AFLTS graduate, was installed July 24 as pastor of Messiah Lutheran, Champaign, Ill. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated at the service.

**Dale Finstrom** and **Gary Simons** were ordained Aug. 7 at Maranatha

Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., with Pastor Robert Lee officiating. Finstrom serves Maranatha, and Simons serves Grong Lutheran, Hawley, Minn.

Members of the Coordinating Committee received **St. Stephen's Church**, Metropolis, Ill., onto the congregational roster during their August meeting. The church was formerly a member of the ELCA.

**Pastor Warren Swanson,** Tucson, Ariz., accepted a call to serve as associate pastor of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash.

#### [ABCDEFG]

#### 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.

**FLY:** Free Lutheran Youth, formed from the former Luther League Federation. Hosts a national youth convention every two years.

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

#### **AFLC** memorials — July

#### **AFLBS**

Lorraine Nyhus, Bernhard Nelson, Amy Haugen, Ray Kinneberg, Clara Rehak, Linda Heikkinen, Kermit Gilje, Edward Kummer, Sue Barnhart

**AFLTS** 

Esther Brubakken

Evangelism

Jeannie Brandt

**Home Misisons** 

Mrs. Henry Broten

Andy Bauslow

**Miriam Infant Home** 

Fay Hassler

Vision

Clara Rehak, Bud Landby

**WMF** 

Janice Wrtzfeld, Jessie Yngsdal, Jeannie Brandt (2)

World Missions

Harbey Buchner

#### **Association of Free Lutheran Congregations**

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (7 months) - January 1 - July 31, 2005

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund*	\$387,377	\$33,378	\$253,928	66
Youth Ministries	56,062	6,151	40,535	72
Parish Education	81,988	6,120	42,976	52
Seminary	156,804	15,247	120,144	77
Bible School	269,308	28,438	180,018	67
Home Missions	277,870	17,518	139,301	50
World Missions	262,377	17,364	129,964	50
Personal Support	368,688	30,633	218,188	59
TOTALS	\$1,860,474	\$137,331	\$985,753	<b>53</b>
<b>TOTALS 2004</b>	\$1,739,460	\$154,330	\$1,061,598	61
Goal 58%		•		

The Evangelism Department received \$7,405 in July.

\* Includes Evangelism totals

Please contact individual departments for more information on projects.

#### [Editorial]

# view of the future

he largest gatherings, numbers wise, in the life of our Association of Free Lutheran Congregations are the Free Lutheran Youth national conventions held every other year. It was the same this year as 1,612 students and adults gathered in Estes Park, Colo. The conventions



**Craig Johnson** 

provide a sense as to what the AFLC is going to look like in the years ahead, and also a picture of what the AFLC is like today.

Getting a picture of what the AFLC is like is even more of a challenge than

taking the picture of the whole group gathered for the FLY convention. The AFLC consists of nearly 280 congregations located all across the US. Our congregations have diversity in our heritage and background, size, worship styles and types of ministries in which we're involved. How can we get a picture of such a group?

If FLY is an indication of what the picture of the AFLC looks like, I like the looks of it.

At the center of the picture is the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. The core truths of our sinfulness and God's grace were clearly presented during the FLY's workshops and services. The aim of the convention was to get the students in the Word and the Word in the students.

Worship that is planned and

prepared is a key part of the picture of FLY. The FLY worship team works hard and strives for excellence in what they do. They teach a lesson by their example. The lesson sometimes gets lost because we focus so much on issues of style.

Those involved in leading worship in our congregations should strive to do the very best they can. Worship of the almighty God deserves nothing less. It should be prayerfully and thoughtfully prepared, using the talents and creativity God has given.

I have no problem with worship services that are very much the same Sunday to Sunday, if that is the way the congregation believes they can best honor God and minister to people. I do have a problem if the reason the worship service is the same each week is simply because it is the easiest way to do it and the leaders do not want to put forth the time and effort needed to work at planning and preparing for worship. Whatever the style of our worship, we should strive to do the best we can in all we do.

The FLY picture isn't like some pictures I have of my ancestors. It seems Norwegians of the past didn't think it was appropriate to smile when a picture was being taken. We can almost act that way sometimes in church, as if smiling and laughter is an inappropriate thing for a serious Christian to do.

There was a lot of laughter and smiling going on at the FLY convention. Sometimes the cause might have been the silliness that can come with being young, but a lot of the time I believe the cause was the joy of the Lord. The Bible

If FLY is an indication of what the picture of the AFLC looks like, I like the looks of it.

says, "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones" (Proverbs 15:30, NIV). It also says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

Along with the smiles, seriousness about the things of the Lord was clearly in the picture at FLY. Many students were wrestling with major issues. The Word and Spirit of God were stirring their souls. They had a passion that could be seen. Too often as people get older, passion fades from the picture. Faith and service to God becomes an old habit and a comfortable routine instead of a passion from the heart. May the picture of our church body be a moving picture, as we are always moving closer to the Lord.

The picture of FLY and the AFLC is not a perfect one. Apart from Christ it would be ugly. But because of Jesus, crucified and risen again, it's a beautiful picture. As long as we remain in Christ, the picture is going to keep getting better.

#### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

# [Something to Share] suburban castles

y friend called me a "suburban princess" the other day and I cringed. Not that I don't secretly long to be a beautiful princess in a beautiful castle with a handsome beau at my side, not to mention few to zero cares in the world. A fairytale princess, sure. Who would pass up that opportunity? But a "suburban" princess? That is a criticism of another kind.

I cringed because there's some truth to that statement, and I took the chiding to heart. As a U.S. citizen raised and now living in white, middle-class suburbia, I carry with me many of the privileges this culture provides: a good education, a middle-income wage, the means and know-how to invest my money and purchase property, and the privilege to separate myself from much of the social turmoil of the city. From the exterior, my life is pretty fairytalesque.

But what I don't hear often in suburbia is the truth behind the fairytale — that evil may dwell within our castle walls, that our culture may not be as innocent as we had hoped.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the median black household income in 2003 was approximately \$30,000. Compare that to the median non-Hispanic white household income of \$48,000. Or, consider the 1999 data provided by The World Bank Group, that 2.8 billion people in the world live on less than \$2 a day. When I compare my life to these, the white, middle-class, suburban U.S. citizen is affluent and privileged beyond compare.

So, how do we make sense of this? How do we reconcile the disparity between these worlds? That is a question neither I nor anyone can answer in a 500-word essay, but I am reminded often that "to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (Luke 12:48). Christ's heart was with the oppressed. He came to "bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1). And so we are called to live Christ's life, living in solidarity with one another, sharing our wealth, and striving for equity.

I recently took a class called "Human Diversity and Relations," a required course for my English as a second language teaching certificate. During this course, the discussion veered toward the subject of "white flight," a term we give to the frequent exodus of the white middle to upper class who move outside the city because they want more spacious, higher-end housing and, sometimes, a more racially homogenous community. In the middle of the discussion, Ahmed — a native of Ethiopia — questioned the unfounded fears of this culture with a bit of his humor. Having lived in the U.S. for more than seven years, Ahmed is acquainted with the racism and economic limitations many like him face daily. So, with a smirk on his face and a twinkle in his eye, Ahmed asked in his thick African accent, "So... how far you gonna run?"

We couldn't help but laugh. His humor brought some levity to a heavy subject but certainly no easy answers. How far will we run? And, more importantly, are we running in the wrong direction?

In my land of princes and castles, I have to ask myself who sits in my banquet hall. The poor ... the outcast ... the refugee ... the oppressed? Those Christ came to embrace? And is my castle built at the expense of another's economic misfortune? These are not easy questions, and we aren't given any easy answers. But we are given grace and resources to share with our neighbors. I Timothy 6:17-19 encourages us to be generous and wise stewards of all we have been given. We know that this life is temporary and all we have now is simply a gift.

> Jessica Hillstrom Vision of Glory Lutheran Plymouth, Minn.