

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

SEPTEMBER 2007

It was a transforming
week in the foothills
of Colorado's Rocky
Mountains as nearly
1,900 students,
counselors and staff
met with God at the
FLY Convention.



unshackled



The



virtuoso

BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

At the Free Lutheran Youth Convention I had the chance to tell students the story of Joshua Bell and his lonely violin solo in Washington, D.C.

It happened last January at the L'Enfant Metro Plaza. The 39-year-old virtuoso played incognito. On a corner near the entrance to the train station, the master violinist played his incomparable Stradivarius for 43 minutes in a T-shirt and a baseball cap.

Of the 1,097 people who walked by, just seven people stopped to hear him.

A writer named Gene Weingarten set up the event and wrote about it in the Washington Post. I was fascinated by the article. Isn't that what it's like to talk about Jesus Christ sometimes? You tell people about a Savior who died on a cross and rose again, but they don't care. You feel just like the lonely violinist.

Who is Joshua Bell? He is perhaps the best violinist in the world. And his instrument — built by master Antonin Stradivari in 1713 — is the best of the best. Made of maple, willow and birch, Bell bought it for \$3.5 million. Bell now lives in New York and shares that instrument and his gift with the world.

But on that January day, he played to crowds who cared less. Bell sweated and danced and dragged his bow from 7:51 to 8:34 a.m., and only seven people stopped to hear him for a song or two.

Only two people cared enough to know that it was something special. George listened from a coffee shop. "You could tell in one second that this guy was good, that he was clearly a professional," he told Weingarten. "Most people, they play music. Well, that man was *feeling* it. That man was moving. Moving into the sound."

The other one who stopped to listen was Stacy. When he was done, she said, "I heard you at the Library of Congress. That was fantastic!"

Josh Bell was a little surprised — to play so hard and have so few people care. "People were actually, ah, ignoring me," said Bell. "I'm surprised at the number of people who don't pay attention at all, as if I'm invisible. Because, you know what? I'm makin' a lot of noise!"

You have something worth far more than \$3.5 million. You have the gospel, the truth, the answer that can give them the eternal presence of God within them. You play, you witness and you bring it home, but so few care.

Just like they ignored Jesus.

Isaiah 53:9 says, "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And like one from whom men hide their face. He was despised and we did not esteem him."

You and I are called to tell people about Jesus. Some are warm; some are cold to the gospel. Tell them about Christ anyway. Drag that bow and tell them that Jesus is alive. Stand alone when everyone else is afraid. And don't quit or let go. One more song. One more hour. Soon they will stop. They will listen to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit will help them hear. Don't quit playing.

Johnson serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

September 2007 >> THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 45, no. 9

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@afcl.org

Editorial Board Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

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

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@afcl.org.

Subscription rates:
\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S.
\$18 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$20 a year, International
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

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

You may speak but a word to a child, and in that child there may be slumbering a noble heart which shall stir the Christian Church in years to come.

— Charles Spurgeon

Jesus isn't a religious crutch. He's a Stretcher. We need to lie down and surrender.

— Marty Christensen
FLY evening speaker

If we are to raise children who know the Lord and follow Him, it will not happen in youth group alone. There must be family ministry. That means ministry to the family, devotions within the family, and opportunities for the family to serve together.

— Pastor Kevin Olson

A youth worker in our town was recently fired because he was reaching the “wrong kind of kid.” I thought the wrong kind of kid was the right kind of kid. The elders insisted that youth ministry was not about bringing in the “riff raff” off the streets but working with the kids that were already Christians. I thought we were all riff raff.

— Mike Yaconelli

I was tremendously blessed by the countless volunteer hours that were put in by all the staff, speakers and counselors. Their servant spirit was evident throughout the convention and God used them to help make the whole week an incredibly joyful adventure.

— Pastor Paul Kneeland
FLY 2007 President



unshackled

galatians 5:1



“Unshackle”

Part of speech: verb; definition: free

Synonyms: Absolve, acquit, clear, disimprison, dismiss, emancipate, exonerate, free, liberate, loose, loosen, oust, pardon, release, unbind, unchain, unimprison.



Youth group



Electives



Unshackled



Prodigal son



Girls' service





Devotions



Frisbee



KFLY news



At the cross



BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

They came from all over the country. Some were from small towns. Others were from big cities. Some are part of a large youth group. Others were from youth groups that could fit in a compact car. Some had been in a relationship with Jesus most of their lives. Others were just starting to investigate the whole idea of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. They all came to the same place — the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo., from July 2 to 6 for the Free Lutheran Youth National Convention.

It was the largest number ever at an AFLC national event. In attendance were: 1,149 students, 238 counselors, 146 support staff, 241 adults and 93 kids for a total of 1,867. Most of all God's Spirit was present, and because of that, lives were transformed.

The theme of the convention was "Unshackled," taken from Galatians 5:1. The good news of freedom in Christ was proclaimed to students who were suffering in bondage. Throughout the week, students confessed a need to be set free from fear, worry, insecurity, addictions, pornography, a fear of death, bitterness, anger and a variety of other things.

Mornings at the convention included Bible studies and worship times along with a large number of workshops to choose from daily.

Afternoons provided times for recreation, including organized tournaments for Ultimate Frisbee, basketball and volleyball. Young people could also play miniature golf, swim, create craft projects or go on a hike in the mountains as a part of a supervised group. Afternoons also included, among other things, concerts, a talent show and a drama presentation.

On the evening of July Fourth, David Witt and Mujahid El Masih from the organization "Voice of the Martyrs" were the evening speakers. They told of the 200 million Christians in 60 nations who, persecuted because of their faith in Christ, are in prison. But their souls are free in Jesus.

Mujahid told his story of growing up in Islam and being taught to hate Christians. God miraculously met him and brought him into the family of God. After his conver-

sion he became a pastor. He has suffered a great deal of persecution but he has learned a great deal. He told of how God has faithfully cared for him. He encouraged the young people: "No matter what it takes, follow Jesus. Even if it takes your life."

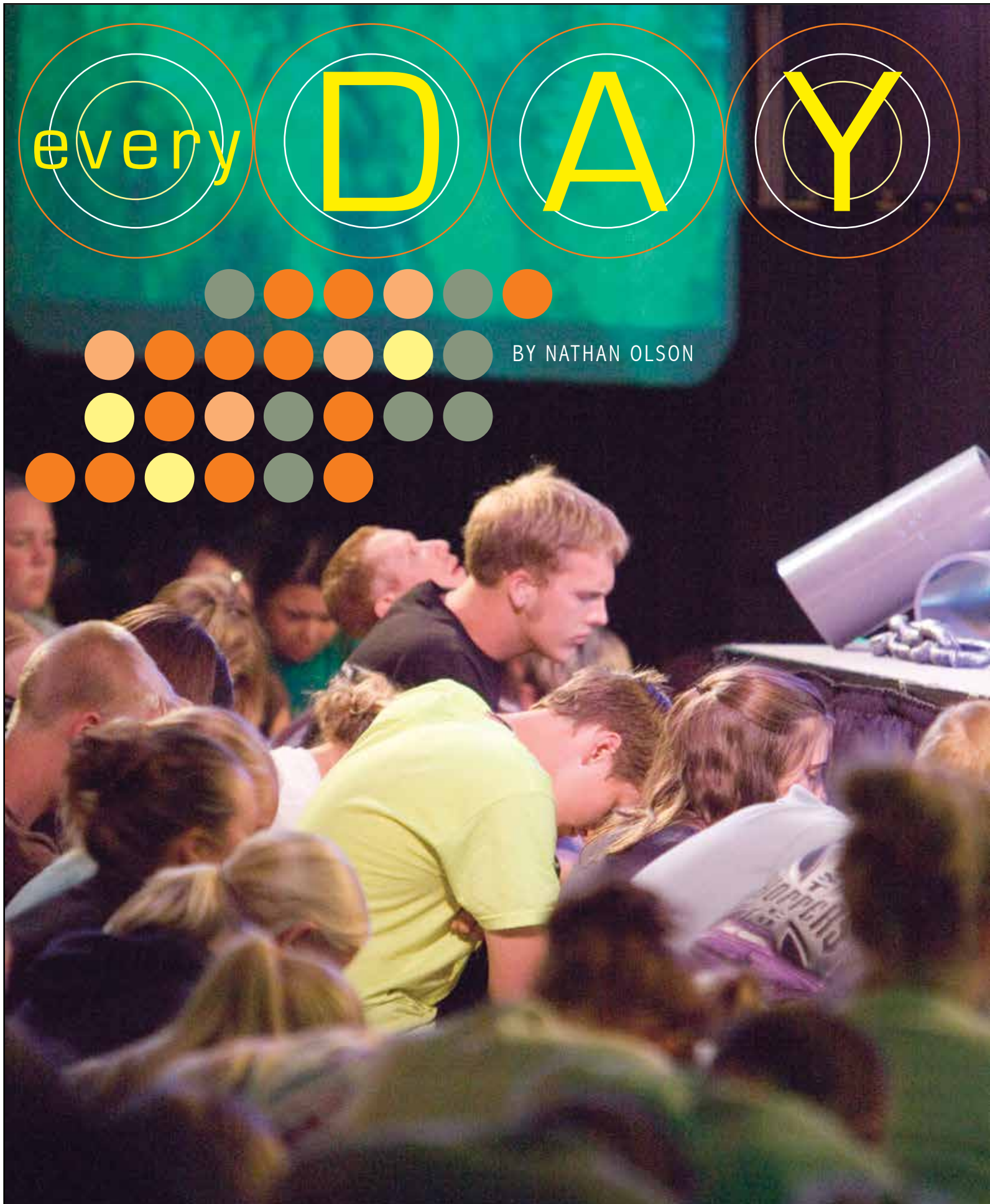
Witt told stories from his travels around the world as he visits the persecuted church. He said, "The persecuted church is also the joyful church." Many view prison not as captivity, he said, but as an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus.

The first night 70 students came forward in response to the invitation to commit their lives to Christ, to renew their relationship with the Lord or meet with someone for prayer and counsel. At the close of another evening service, crosses were brought out and placed in the front of the auditorium, along with buckets full of small chains. The crosses had nails on them on which the chains could be placed. Students were invited to come and place a chain on the cross. As they did, they symbolically took the sin that was holding them in bondage, brought it to the cross of Christ and left it there.

Young people who had been resistant to God's truth were broken and humbled. Big strong guys were crying tears of repentance and of joy. Students spoke of learning to forgive. Young people were helping one another to find freedom in Christ. Some young men confessed they came to the convention only interested in girls, but now they were more interested in worshiping God.

As the convention closed on Friday evening, those same crosses, full of chains, were brought out once again. Students were encouraged to come forward, but this time to take the chains off the cross. Each chain was to represent a person who was still in bondage to sin. By taking the chains the students were making a commitment to help those people find true freedom. Young people lined up to grab a chain while the words, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound ... my chains are gone, I've been set free, My God, My Savior has ransomed me," were sung.

The church looks forward to seeing what the Lord will do through those young people who left with a desire to spread the good news of freedom found in Jesus.



every

D

A

Y

BY NATHAN OLSON

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”
[Colossians 2:6-7]



From July 2-6, nearly 1,900 youths and adults got together for the largest youth conference in the AFLC. This camp, Free Lutheran Youth (FLY), was packed with big-name speakers, times of worship, quiet times, prayer and close in-depth studying of the Word of God. It's a camp worth looking forward to. Some students even start counting down the days for the next convention as soon as the previous one ends.

As I spent time talking with friends before FLY, I heard many say something to the extent of, “I can’t wait until FLY, it’s going to be a time that I’m finally able to learn and grow a ton in the Lord!” as if somehow this was an unusual event for so many in their daily lives. FLY is indeed a time to grow in the Lord and an unforgettable time of learning for many. But having that daily growth and encounter is meant for the everyday, not just for a single week every few years.

The question that I felt God bringing into my head during FLY was, “Are you not growing and learning about Me in your day-to-day life just as much as at a camp?” This need for an everyday encounter is not merely helpful in our walk with God, but truly the very thing that sustains us in our faith in Him. Many Christians often have the misconception that church, camps and conferences are all times to grow in the Lord and to really study His Word and then the rest of the time in life is a time to just float spiritually. Even though a camp like FLY may be a time to encounter God, don’t we all have that same possibility in our day-to-day lives? Don’t you have the same Word of God and the same ability to look over it and study it?

The Lord says in Joshua 1:8: “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night.” It doesn’t sound like studying God’s Word is something the Lord is suggesting for us to do, this is a command! God truly desires to have that “daily conference” with us and to speak to us from His Word. By meditating

on it day and night, God is giving us that chance to continue to grow and thrive in our walk with Him. Are you ready for that? As Colossians 2:7 says, we are to be “rooted and built up in Him.” To be a strong Christian, rooted and built up in Christ, we truly need to be having that daily time in His Word!

Oftentimes we don’t have a problem having that time with God when special events come around. But as soon as we get back to daily lives, our drive to encounter the Lord Almighty seems to diminish. Truly having this daily encounter with God is not something we can accomplish through our own will and power; this is something that can only be obtained by God’s grace and mercy upon our lives. However, this time with you is something that the Lord seeks out with a fiery passion. He desires you ... have you come to desire Him?

So what if God wants you to have a daily encounter with Him? Would you take time to meet with the Lord Almighty? Would you get up that half-hour early to spend some time praying for His will to be done in the day ahead? Could you set aside time to be in God’s Word and study it? As Paul writes to the Colossians, “Continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him.” For sure Paul isn’t talking about a single week event in which to be “built up in Christ.” Rather, he’s talking about a continual process.

What are we as Christians doing to meet that challenge? Are we simply trying to get by as we wait for the next church service, youth group meeting, or big conference to roll around? Or are we seeking the Lord on a day-to-day basis? May God be so much a part of our daily lives that we grow and thrive off of our everyday encounter with Him!

I hope and pray that as a body of believers we would each be able to encourage one another to move forward in our walk with the Lord and come to the point where we are seeking Him continually by His grace!

Olson, Shakopee, Minn., is a 2007 high school graduate. He was elected second vice president of FLY at the convention.



free
from

fear



BY REBBEKAH HITE



Drip ... drip ... drip.
The noise was coming from somewhere in the left corner of my tiny cell. I shifted, attempting to make myself comfortable on the pile of reeking, moldy straw. The stench of the prison is something you never get used to. I was all alone. The guards put me in a solitary cell: they could not trust me with other people.

A crowd started to gather in the courtyard above. I tried to hear what they were saying by pressing my head against the ceiling, but my shackles held me back. The chains were tight; my wrists were bruised and gashed from trying to escape. There was no escape for what I had done.

The crowd began screaming something. They screamed it louder until I heard it clearly: it was my name. Then someone started to chant: "Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!" I was going to be crucified. I knew I deserved it. The guard came, grabbed me and unlocking the chains from the wall attached them to his own wrists. I made a mad attempt to break loose, but the guard quickly ended it with a blow, knocking me down.

Half dragged, I made my way up the stairs to a dais overlooking the crowd. There were two men among the guards: one beaten to the point of exhaustion, and the other the Roman ruler called Pilate. Pilate turned and nodded to the four guards holding me. One came to me with the keys. He started unlocking the shackles. As I stood there, my mind trying to sort out what was happening, I turned to the man who was beaten. His bloodshot eyes bore a hole into me. Suddenly it was clear. This man was taking my place on the cross.

After the guard released me from the last shackle, I started to weep. What has this man done that could have been worse than the crime I committed? Why was I going free? I stooped down and grabbed a shackle that lay among the pile at my feet. I gazed again into the man's eyes. What was his name? WHY? I didn't understand.

The guards grabbed me and pulled me back into the building. They led me through room after room until we reached a door that led onto a street. Then they shoved me out, locked the door and left. I stood there holding the shackle. I looked down at it for a moment, then slipped it on and closed it on my wrists. I just couldn't be free. I didn't deserve it.

That shackle was one I wore for quite some time. Maybe you recognize part of my story. It is found in Mark 15:1-15 and in my own life's history. When I attended the Gathering (a time of worship and reflection) at FLY this year, one of the worship leaders said something that gripped my heart. He told the story of Barabbas and said how each one of us is a Barabbas in our own way. I realized that it was true. I was Barabbas, only I was a Barabbas who could not let go of all the shackles that bound her wrists. When I gave my heart to God at the ARC in 2003, I kept a shackle on. Engraved on the cuff of it was the word "FEAR."

Have you ever let fear rule your life? I did. While my heart was God's, I realized that my actions were controlled by fear. At FLY, God opened my eyes to how full of fear I really was. He asked me to give it all to Him and trust in His love. I did, and the rest of the week was a testimony to how God's love drives out fear. I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

During the week at FLY, I participated in a street witnessing event and had the opportunity to meet several new people who blessed my life in amazing ways. None of that would have been possible if I had been too afraid to meet new people.

After that, my fears were gone. I do not have to hide the fact that I am not perfect. I have faults, but Christ has made me perfect in love. I will stumble and be afraid sometimes, but Christ has made me perfect in love. Psalm 118:5-6 says, "In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" What can man do?

The world needs to hear the message of Christ. I am ashamed to say that I did not spread God's message of freedom because I was afraid of being uncomfortable. During one of the morning electives I realized that I would be more uncomfortable knowing that I refused to let God use me to make a difference in someone's life rather than talking to a stranger.

Don't let fear hinder your life, become unshackled.

Hite, Osceola, Wis., is a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.



FLY worship



Bible study



what
really
matters



Soccer



Todd Friel



Electives



Volleyball



when you let God's hand lead

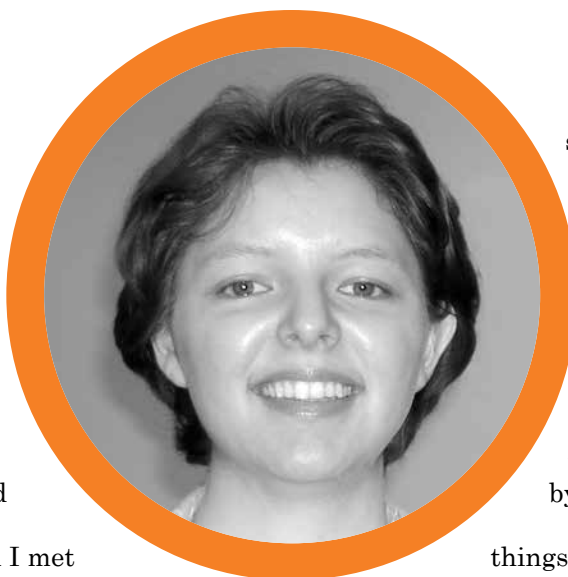
BY LAURA GRAYBAR

It is amazing how God works in the lives of his children. In mine, His almighty hand usually works so flawlessly that it seems not to be there at all. That is until life unfolds in such a way that it is apparent God has been at work. That was the experience I had this July at the Free Lutheran Youth Convention in Estes Park, Colo. The flawless hand of God worked things out so well, and all for His glory and my benefit.

I remember that first night when I met with my campers. After unpacking and settling in I looked at them and said, "We know God wants us here because none of us were meant to be here." It was true, especially for me. It was by sheer providence that, after filling all the spots our church had for FLY, another church asked if we had anyone willing to serve as a counselor for them. I was pleased to be their "anyone."

When I arrived at the convention I was asked to switch with another counselor to a different room, and then, after arriving in my new room, all the girls in that room switched! It seemed clear God was busy ironing out where everyone needed to be, and that excited me. What a way to start the week: knowing we were all exactly where God intended.

I had never been a counselor before and the experience was a sobering one. I remembered how as a teen my focus at similar youth conventions was only on my own spiritual life. It was just me and God on those retreats, but not now. I was a counselor, and my focus had broadened to my relationship with God and how that affects the spiritual lives of my campers. I quickly learned to love them and wished the best for them, but I struggled in the words I wanted to



say and trying to remember the verses I wanted to share. And then, halfway through the week, I realized I was talking too much and praying too little. It was a horrible realization and I spent the remainder of the week trying to correct it, but in the end I was reminded of what God had shown me from the beginning; He was the one who had brought us together and if I blessed anyone it is by His grace.

During the week I witnessed many things which could only be explained by the working of a divine hand. Long nights were spent talking with my campers about things that really matter. I was blessed by their sincerity. I had earnest prayers with fellow counselors, and by the end we felt peace that could only come from God. I volunteered as a counselor to meet with teens who went forward after the messages. I met a wonderful young woman and watched as God revealed His love to her.

I am particularly struck that I found a deeper relationship with God when I was looking to lead others. During the week I was reminded of God's sovereignty, my frailty, and of God's constant pursuing love. God's guiding hand has not stopped there. It continues on. I find it every day and in every act. Sometimes it is seamless and I cannot sense that it is there. But at times when I am where I never should have been and witness that which can only be explained by Him, then I know He has been guiding me and will continue to lead me to where He intends me to be.

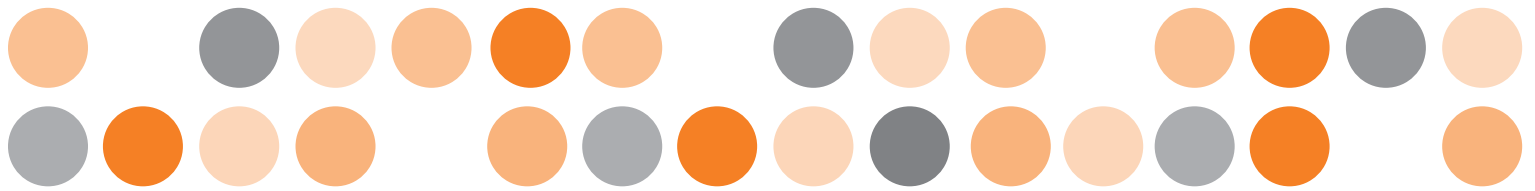
Graybar is a member of Christ is Lord Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.

never hold back



Personal time with God





BY SARAH VIGNESS

The works of God are very inspiring, miraculous and breathtaking. The Free Lutheran Youth Convention in Colorado is just one of the many ways God can work in lives. It brings me such joy when God reveals different thoughts and needs at different times throughout our lives. One thought God laid on my heart two weeks before and in Colorado was sorrowing for the salvation of others. There are people all around us who are not saved from the wrath of God. They are not prepared to leave this life because without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be an alternative: a separation from the Lord forever.

Matthew 18:3 says, “And he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” God convicted me of how important it is to never hold back when sharing the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the power and love of Jesus Christ, He gave me an outward experience like no other. This power was through a prayer of sorrowing for the salvation of others. I prayed for hearts to be opened, softened, and humbled, so all can be saved from God’s wrath and follow His will. I John 5:14 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”

While praying this prayer, my legs became weak and I could no longer stand. I then started to say, “Lord, I need You, because without You I am nothing. I need your strength.” I could not stop saying these words as my breathing became heavier and deeper. As the prayer continued, I started to say, “Thank you Jesus.” These were the only words that could come out of my mouth. I felt that God was at work to reveal His will. God is good and He can work in mysterious ways. Then, with the help of others, I



was able to come back to a normal breathing with a heart thanking God for every moment of what Christ had me feel through Him.

This experience was nothing of me, but everything of Christ and His power through prayer. As Jeremiah 33:3 says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

God has a will for each of our lives, which are perfect when we look to Him.

After this experience — it wasn’t because it was physical but because I saw how God can work in lives — God convicted me of what He wants to do with my life.

A quick reminder: don’t put faith in physical experiences like mine. If they don’t happen again, it is tempting to doubt faith. Put your faith in God! Remember the example of Thomas, who was with Jesus for years and knew the power Jesus had. Yet when Thomas was told that Jesus was alive, he did not believe until he physically saw the nail marks in Jesus’ hands (John 20:25).

Yes, my experience was indescribable because of what the Lord did within me. Through this experience I now know that God wants to work through me to be an “unshackler” because of the desire He gave me to have no one suffer in hell. I am going to allow Him to work through me to use me in any way according to His will. I am His.

Life is short, so we always need to be prepared for whatever is to come at us, and be willing to do whatever the Lord asks of us. Believe in the power of prayer because in God’s will and God’s timing, nothing is impossible (Matthew 17:20).

Vigness is a member of Our Saviour’s Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.

testimonies ...

from Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wa.



Listening



BY MIKAYLA POWERS

It's amazing how God can change someone's faith, just like that.

On July 5, at FLY, I was saved completely. Before, I said I was a Christian, but never really understood what it meant. When people in my youth group shared how God came into their lives, something just came over me. I could feel God watching over me. I encourage everyone to share God's Word with your saved and unsaved friends and family. Make God your number one priority in your life.

Jesus loves you!



Being yourself



BY GABBY DANIELSON

This experience has changed my life miraculously! I have gotten so much closer to God. One night my youth group got together and shared our thoughts and feelings about our week so far. That night I think about every person in our group (65 people) laughed and cried together. It was amazing to know and feel God's presence with us. The people in our youth group are a lot closer now. We feel so much closer together with each other and with God. That week at FLY I was saved! Now I realize that I need to go back home and preach the gospel to my friends so they can be saved as well.



Making friends



BY KELLY BRAZELL

The Lord is glorious. That is my statement for the week. It is the only simple way to explain how He has touched my heart and my life this week.

Wednesday evening at the Gathering was a really emotional time for me. I have had some pain and trauma in my life, basically since I was 10, and this one person had control of my life. Wednesday evening I left my pain and anger at the cross and had this great sense of relief. I went back to my seat and just started weeping. I'm not quite sure what the tears were for. Maybe for sorrow or maybe for joy. The Lord lifted a burden from me that night and I will forever rejoice in His glory.

My friend shared a verse with me this week that clearly defines Wednesday evening for me. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:2, 3). I will be forever grateful to the Lord.

the next GENERATION

Pastor Jason Holt answers the call to serve God in AFLC Youth Ministries

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

As he was finishing his training at the Free Lutheran Seminary and thinking about what he was going to do next, some statistics kept pulling at Jason Holt's heart. The statistics say 75 percent of people who come to know Jesus as their Savior do so before the age of 18. Jason kept asking himself, "What am I going to do about that?" The answer he felt God giving him was a call to youth ministry.

For the past eight years Holt has been serving the youths and families of Calvary Free Lutheran of Fergus Falls, Minn. On Aug. 1 Holt began serving as AFLC Youth Ministries director, replacing Pastor Kevin Olson who is now working with AFLC World Missions and the distance learning program.

Pastor Holt has a desire to encourage AFLC congregations and youth workers. He wants to help disciples of Christ make disciples.

While in Fergus Falls, he was the coordinator of a network roundtable of youth workers. That experience helped him see how youth workers need to come alongside each other to encourage one another. It also taught him how the Lord can do amazing things when people partner and support one another.

Approximately half of the congregations in the AFLC do not have regular youth work going on. Holt wants to encourage those congregations. He sees himself as a servant of the whole AFLC, called to build up the local congregation. In particular he has a heart for those congregations and youth workers that are somewhat isolated from other congregations and in need of fellowship.

Holt will be spending part of his time teaching at the

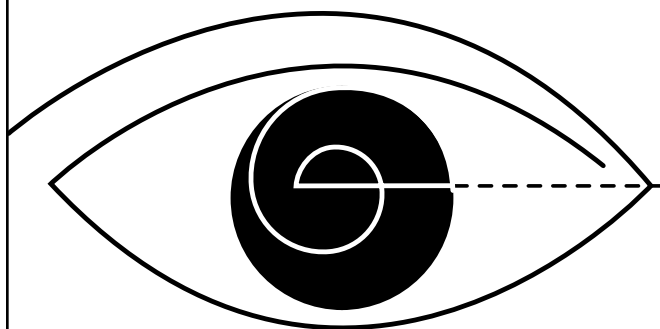


AFLC schools in the area of youth ministries. He also has the goal to visit all 16 districts of the AFLC during his first four years of serving in his new position. He recognizes that Pastor Olson developed a lot of wonderful relationships during his 11 years of serving as director of Youth Ministries. Holt sees a challenge in renewing and extending those relationships.

Prayer for wisdom is a request of Pastor Holt — wisdom in providing biblical counsel to congregations, wisdom in handling the various situations that will arise and wisdom in making decisions as to how he can best serve. He also asks for prayer for his family as they move and adjust to a new stage of life.

Pastor Holt is married to Jennifer, and they have five children ranging in age from 3 to 10 years.

Holt sees youth work as a ministry of the whole congregation. He enjoys seeing people of all ages involved in the youth work of a congregation. He said it is a healthy sign when senior saints are contacting youths and parents are encouraging one another. That is a free and living congregation at work; the body of Christ coming together to make disciples of the next generation.



YOUR walk WITH GOD

THE WMF BIBLE STUDY ON I CORINTHIANS

It is not easy living the Christian life in our contemporary society with secular influences all around us. Television, movies, newspapers, music and even other Christians pull and draw us away from our values and beliefs. Our culture tells us one thing and the Bible tells us another. How is it possible to live a life that honors and glorifies Christ in the midst of moral and spiritual chaos? These are many of the same problems, pressures, concerns and struggles that the early church in Corinth was dealing with. The Apostle Paul had some wise counsel and principles for the church in Corinth (and for us today) in his first letter to the Corinthians.

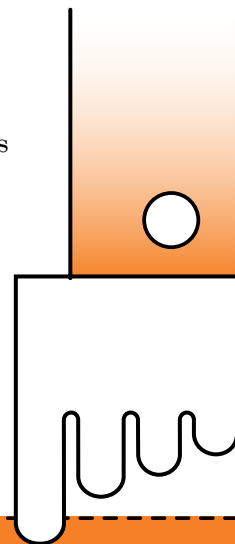
As we study together we see throughout the epistle that God's wonderful gift of grace shines through in every situation. In the ancient world "grace" was just a common greeting often linked with the word "peace." In today's world grace can mean all sorts of things; not many people know what it is to experience God's grace as a reality and joy of life. Some may think that grace is words spoken before a meal or a description of personal charm or attractiveness. Few have considered God's grace at all. In Paul's day God's grace was a totally new concept to the

Corinthians. It seems that things haven't really changed that much at all, have they?

In "Gift of Grace," the WMF's 2008 Bible study, we'll take a peek into historic Corinth and the baby church struggling with the many problems that hindered their walk with the Lord, their relationships with one another and their witness for Christ in the very worldly city in which they lived.

I Corinthians is not only personal and practical, but also contains some of the most beloved and familiar passages in Scripture. Whether we have questions about personal behavior, doctrine, spiritual gifts, love, marriage or even how to function as part of the body of Christ, Paul has much to teach each of us today. As believers, we must respond to the amazing grace of God!

Holcomb, Eugene, Ore., is the author of "Gift of Grace" Bible study.



ORDER FORM

To order your 2008 WMF Bible study, "Gift of Grace," fill out the form and mail (along with checks made out to National WMF) to WMF Executive Secretary Dawn Johnson, 2991 30th Ave., Wilson, WI 54027. **Place your order by Oct. 1.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Church _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____

Number of books: (\$8/each) _____

World Missions director visits Russian church



The Coyles are serving their AFLTS internship in Salinas, Calif.

God is still issuing missionary calls. Missionary candidates Andy and Monica Coyle have both taken numerous trips to Eastern Europe and Russia with East European Missions Network. God has impressed upon their hearts a desire to spend their lives ministering to the people of Russia. The leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia has offered the Coyles an invitation to come and work with them.

Recognizing the call of God on their hearts, the World Missions Committee asked me to travel to Russia and investigate the possibility of sending the Coyles to work with the Ingrian Church as they rebuild after communism. I left for Russia the day after the Annual Conference (June 16) to meet with the leadership of the church. They expressed a desire to have the Coyles work with them and eventually hope to start a Bible school to disciple people who have become Christians.

Before returning to the United States, I also traveled to visit missionaries Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel in Ukraine and Tim and Renata Hinrichs in Poland.

Please pray for the following:

Visas: Relations between Russia and the United States have cooled recently. Visas for missionaries are now possible, but things can change quickly.

Direction: That God would give wisdom to the World Mission Committee as they consider the placement of the Coyles.

Palmer is director of AFLC World Missions.

Mexico's YOUTHS



BY PASTOR TODD SCHIERKOLK

Our youth group in Mexico started small. So small, in fact, that we had to open it up to kids in fifth grade in order to actually call it a "group." But time passes and those fifth graders are now in high school and the group has expanded to include kids who aren't even allowed to come to church.

Half of the 12 or so kids who come to the youth meetings still haven't received the green light from their parents to worship with us on Sundays, so the times we gather together for Bible study and worship provide a vital spiritual connection for them. Several of the young people began helping us this year as assistants or teachers in the two Kid's Clubs God has given us. We have been glad to see them grow in the Lord through this service and also through the dramas and puppet ministry that they are participating in, as well.

There are a number of kids in the clubs who are old enough to join the youth group this next year, and we are praying that God will soften their parents' hearts to let them take that step.

God also provided a great blessing for us in Danny and Marcella Giles — 2004 MTI graduates and current short-term assistants to Mexico — when they decided to stay and fill in for us with the youth ministry while we are doing some deputation for a few months. Please pray for them as they share God's love with these young people.

Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk serve as AFLC missionaries in Jerez, Mexico.



Pastor Kevin Olson (center) was recognized on the final evening of the FLY Convention for his 11 years of service as director of AFLC Youth Ministries. Olson stepped down from the position in order to begin a distance education program for the AFLC. Also pictured are his wife, Pam (at left), and members of the Youth Board.

FLY ELECTION RESULTS:

PRESIDENT



Daniel Keinanen was elected as the president of FLY 2009. Keinanen is a youth worker at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.

1ST V. PRESIDENT



Ryan Patenaude was elected as first vice president of FLY 2009. He serves as a youth worker at Peace Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio.

2ND V. PRESIDENT



Nathan Olson was elected as second vice president of FLY 2009. A member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn., he plans to attend AFLBS in the fall.

SECRETARY



Betsy O'Neil was elected as secretary of FLY 2009, a position she held for the 2007 convention. She is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

DEV. LIFE SECRETARY



Pastor Todd Erickson was elected as devotional life secretary for FLY 2009. He serves Roseau Free Lutheran, Roseau, Minn.

AFLC departments join together to publish gospel tract



The new gospel tract, "The Mirror," is pictured above, with an inside page pictured at right. To order copies, contact Parish Education.

AFLC Parish Education, Youth Ministries and Evangelism departments joined together this summer to publish a gospel tract titled, "The Mirror."

Published by Ambassador Publications, the tract explains how the Bible is like a mirror that shows us our sin and need for a Savior. The tract clearly explains the way of salvation and seeks to assure readers that they are saved by God's grace alone and not by their efforts.

The tract has already been used successfully as an evangelism tool. During the Free Lutheran Youth

Convention held in Estes Park, Colo., counselors used the tract during the evening services when students went forward, responding to altar calls. It was also used by students who, as a part of a workshop on evangelism, took a field trip into the town of Estes Park to participate in a street evangelism campaign.

The tracts are available through Ambassador Publications for \$.75 each or 20 for \$14. Contact Parish Education at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441, call (763) 545-5631 or email parished@aflc.org.

AFLTS hosts 2007 Summer Institute

The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary (AFLTS) hosted the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 6-10 at the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. more than 60 people registered for classes.

Classes offered this year included: "Studies in the Minor Prophets," as taught by Pastor Jerry Holmaas; "The Doctrine of Baptism," by Dr. Francis Monseth; "Studies in the Book of Revelation," by Pastor Jerry Moan; "Highlights in American Lutheran History," by Pastor Robert Lee; and "History of Preaching," by guest instructor Dr. Steven Lombardo.



More than 60 people registered for the 2007 Summer Institute of Theology, held Aug. 6-10 at the AFLC Schools campus in Plymouth, Minn.

▶ July memorials

General Fund

Pastor John Strand

Home Missions

Jerry Smith

Doris Reistad

Mary Steffenson

Parish Education

Gene Barnum Smith

Youth Ministries

Hazel Reichardt

WMF

Iona Korhonen

Steve Rikken

Thelma Piskule

Audrey Pickner

Duane Torgerson

Julius Plooster

World Missions

Jeanette Haarstad

Alf Berg

Evelyn House

John Besserud

... in honor of

General Fund

Pastor Robert Lee

Training Seminar trips on accelerated schedule

Dyrud and Giles traveled to India in August; other trips planned

In order to reduce the amount of time it takes to complete seminary training by students in India from six years to four, the AFLC World Missions Department, along with AFLTS, has increased the Training Seminar meetings from an annual event to three times each year.

The Training Seminar was launched in Chirala, India, in 2005 to help lay pastors gain much-needed seminary training in order to effectively minister to their congregations. Teaching teams were sent every summer. However, members of both the AFLC in India and the United States agreed that the schedule needed to be accelerated. To meet that need, an additional trip was scheduled in February, another is planned for November and the final seminar is planned for early next year.

Pastor Connely Dyrud, Maple Grove, Minn., and Pastor Dan Giles, AFLC missionary in Jerez, Mexico, traveled to Chirala Aug. 3-19 for the previously planned seminar. Giles taught a class on "Soteriology," and Dyrud taught two classes, "Christology," and "Pneumatology." Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D., Pastor Stephen Mundfrom, Arlington, S.D., and Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn., will travel to India for the November Training Seminar.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn., traveled to Brazil July 30 through Aug. 11 to teach in the AFLC-Brazil churches and seminary and at the pastor's conference in Campo Mourão.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Grace Lutheran**, Bensenville, Ill. The former TAALC congregation was established in the 1950s by the former ELC. The congregation is temporarily served by Pastor Kent Nylander, a retired pastor.

Pastor Rodger Olson has accepted a call to serve the two-point North Dakota parish of Zion Lutheran, Tioga, and Norman Lutheran, White Earth.

Pastor David Skordahl, St. Michael, Minn., is serving as interim pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran, Morris, Ill. Lay pastor **Steven Larson** resigned from his position with the church.

Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn., is serving as interim pastor at Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.

Pastor Kirk Flaa, a 2007 AFLTS graduate, has accepted a call to serve as senior pastor at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated at Flaa's ordination service Aug. 4 and installation service on Aug. 5, both held at Abiding Savior.

Pastor Shane McLoughlin, a 2007 AFLTS graduate, accepted a call to serve the two-point Wisconsin parish of Hosanna Free Lutheran, Cumberland, and Timberland-Ringebu Free Lutheran, Barronett. Pastor Robert Lee officiated at the installation services on July 29.

Pastor Scott Guhl was installed July 22 as pastor of St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill. Pastor Robert Lee officiated.

Licensed Pastor Dean Lyste, Northwood, N.D., was accepted onto the AFLC fellowship roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. He has accepted a call to serve Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, N.D.

Kirk Thorson, a 2007 graduate of AFLTS, has accepted a call to serve Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore, N.D., and Middle Grove Lutheran, Mekinok, N.D.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- July 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$26,670	\$229,021	63
Youth Ministries	73,114	11,905	44,213	60
Evangelism	108,236	12,376	63,978	59
Parish Education	107,052	5,292	42,225	39
Seminary	216,097	16,631	116,812	54
Bible School	343,545	25,847	191,466	56
Home Missions	316,413	27,458	172,379	54
World Missions	287,808	23,477	131,702	46
Personal Support	407,198	41,702	290,991	71
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$191,358	\$1,282,786	58
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$179,157	\$1,173,994	59

Goal 58%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

free to DREAM

A little boy showed me some new toy cars he had received, and I helped him set up a track on which they could run. He also had a power booster that sent the cars racing around. The little boy looked at me with wide eyes and said, "How about if we set up the rest of the track over there and we'll fly the cars from this track to that one?"

That's just what I wanted to try. He started to pull out more track, but then his dad said, "No." He told his son it wasn't designed to work that way and he should just stick with the smaller track and not try to send cars flying through the air.

It maybe wouldn't have worked. Cars might have gone flying into the couch. But I sure would have liked to have given it a try.

Kids and young people have a freedom to try things. Adults sometimes only see how things won't work. It can happen that way in the church. "We tried that outreach approach before and not many people responded."

"She has been invited to come to church, but she's always said no." "We better just keep doing things the way we've always done it."

A bunch of young people went away from the recent Free Lutheran Youth convention with a desire to help others find freedom in Christ. They have a determination to spread the good news. As they do it they might "set up the track" a little bit different. I hope the congregations they are a part of will give them the freedom to do that.

Some of their attempts at serving the Lord will fail. That is to be expected. People who have never had a glorious failure in their lives aren't trying hard enough. They'll need encouragement. They can learn from our experience. And some of their new ideas will work wonderfully.

In his book, "Dangerous Wonder," Mike Yaconelli wrote about a high school student in his congregation who suggested they have a dinner for the people who worked in the carnival that came to their town each year. They hadn't done that before, but the student felt free to try. She organized the event and it went better than expected. The love of Christ was shown to a group of people that are

often ignored.

As the FLY convention concluded some students talked about starting a Bible study at their public school. I imagine some adults would say: "Somebody will complain. The administration will probably say no." We ought to encourage young people to try. The public high school in our community has a student-led Bible study because some students felt free to try something new.

Too often we get bound to the familiar and shackled by past failures. We act as if our experience is the limit of what is possible. We forget we serve the God for whom "nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37, NIV).

Some of their attempts at serving the Lord will fail. That is to be expected. People who have never had a glorious failure in their lives aren't trying hard enough.

Some people let past defeats chain them to a spirit of pessimism, cynicism and negativity. They scoff when they hear the next generation talk about making a difference for Jesus. They've become "dream stealers."

Jesus, the "Dream Giver," was present at the FLY convention. He set people free from bondage to sin. Young people heard the good news: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). They've been set free to dream as to how they can best serve Christ and His church.

The Free Lutheran movement was started by some young dreamers. Sven Oftedal and Georg Sverdrup came to this country with the dream of "a free church in a free land." In 1874, at the age of 29, Oftedal wrote "The Open Declaration." It spoke out strongly against the authoritarian structure of the Norwegian Synod and called for spiritual revival and free congregations. Some at the time called it an "outrageous attack." We in the AFLC look back on it as the birth of a movement.

We continue to be blessed by young dreamers. Encourage them to dream big dreams that will glorify the Lord.



Pastor Craig Johnson

something to share

BY SANDRA WEAVER

Un SHACKLED

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

~ Proverbs 22:6



There was a lot of anticipation and excitement as our granddaughter, Cassandra, made plans to attend her first FLY convention this summer. There were youth group fund-raisers and mowing for Grandpa and Grandma to raise money, not to mention planning her wardrobe and dreaming the dreams of every young girl about to embark upon a new adventure.

“Grandma, it was the best week of my life!” That is how she described her first experience at FLY.

I replied with, “I’m sure you had a great time meeting new friends and experiencing new things, but what did you learn that’s going to make a difference in your life?”

“Well Grandma, I learned how to be a more effective witness with my actions, words and deeds. I actually shared in the experience of other kids as their lives were unshackled when they accepted Christ, and I watched other Christian kids and myself grow spiritually as we recommitted our lives to Jesus. You know, Grandma, I experienced things that I’d only read and heard about.”

After hearing the positive side of FLY and witnessing the change in Cassandra, I decided to find out what she didn’t like about it. Her only comments were that it was too short and the lunch line was too long.

I still believe that our homes and churches are the best and most effective places to train up a child in the Lord. However, we cannot put a price tag on the positive spiritual experiences we provide for our children outside of their everyday environments. Thank you to everyone who was responsible for making FLY happen and for the positive impact the entire convention had on Cassandra’s life. She will be one of our nine grandchildren to carry on our family’s Christian heritage.

Weaver is a member of Zoar Free Lutheran, Hampden, N.D.