

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

September 21, 1999



**E**veryone  
can serve in  
God's church

A look at the  
roles of the  
pastor and  
the laity



Oiland Lutheran, Greenbush, Minnesota



Trinity Lutheran, Bemidji, Minnesota

**Celebrating 100 years**

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 21, 1999  
Volume 37, Number 12



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631

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### The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413)

is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

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### For subscription changes and information:

*The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E.  
Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Min-  
nesota 55441. 612-545-5631.

### Subscriptions rates:

\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18.00 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

## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Peace in the midst

**T**owering rock cliffs to my left, a deep blue fjord to my right, a small boat dock and several boat houses, tall pine trees and a small meadow area between me and the boat dock. It was a beautiful sight, but even more beautiful than the scene before me was the peace and tranquillity of that place which I encountered on a recent visit to Norway. It was the birthplace of my mother, so you realize my observations and assessments were perhaps slightly biased. However, as I stepped out of the car I was captured by the peace and quiet. The only sound that came to my ears was the tinkling of bells on the sheep that grazed nearby. I don't recall ever before being in such majestic, beautiful and peaceful surroundings. It would be fun to go back and enjoy that peaceful place for a day or two or three.

Sometimes I feel as though peace is a thing of the past. The hurried pace of life, whether it be in the work place, the fast lane on the freeway or the hectic schedule of home and family quite often seems to take away any sense or state of peace. It may be true for you as it is for me, that sometimes it is so very difficult to even find a place to be alone with God for our daily quiet time. The interruptions of telephone, family members, sights, sounds and even our own thoughts of schedules and responsibilities tend to crowd in upon those times where we would expect peace to prevail.

While speaking with His disciples prior to his trial and crucifixion Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." From these words we understand that the "peace" He promised is not a place, but it is a condition of the heart. In the midst of much activity and even turmoil there can and should be that peace of heart and mind for His followers.

I am reminded of a medical doctor I once met. He loved the Lord and made it his purpose in life to serve his Lord. His nurse told us that often while seeing patients in his office he would say to her, "Don't schedule any patients for the next half hour, I need to go to my office," and there in his office he would take time to read the Word and pray. The peace that Jesus promised was important to that man, and he did not allow life's cares, problems and schedules to crowd out the peace that Jesus wanted him to know.

It is true, peace is not found in a place, but in that relationship with Jesus where our eyes are focused on Him and our heart is open to receive the "peace that passeth all understanding." Jesus, please refresh us with that peace even now. Amen.



— *Pastor Elden K. Nelson  
Maranatha Free Lutheran  
Willmar, Minnesota*

## sound bites

A man does not live for himself alone in this earth; rather, he

**1** lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others.

— *Martin Luther*

Sverdrup thought a true congregation was a fellowship of working Christians who used the means and gifts of grace

**4** for the salvation and edification of themselves and humanity. In such a context there would be no attempts to restrict and control lay activities and other gifts of grace. The emphasis would rather be on allowing room and freedom for the full exercise of such gifts.

— *James Hamre*

**6**

**The pastor must never be content with a congregation of saved listeners but must seek to attain a congregation of saved workers.**

— *John Stensvaag*

**2**

The healthy and strong individual is the one who asks for help when he needs it — whether he's got an abscess on his knee or in his soul.

— *Author unknown*

**Buildings, facilities, a board well stocked with shrewd businessmen — these may all make a church run smoothly, but the underlying question is: What is it running smoothly for?**

— *Philip Yancey*

To be a friend a man should be tolerant; he should have an understanding heart and a forgiving nature, knowing that all men stumble now and then and that he who never made a mistake never

accomplished anything.

— *Wilferd A. Peterson*

**5**

# Serving should be shared



— *Pastor Richard Anderson*  
*King of Glory Lutheran*  
*Eden Prairie, Minnesota*

Over a hundred years ago in Norway, it was a sin for a layman to preach or to offer prayer in public except when no pastor could be secured. Some pastors forbid their members from inviting people of other church bodies into their homes and even in death were not to share the same cemetery. Scathing denunciations of tendencies toward Catholicism were being written. It was in that kind of environment that the Lutheran Free Church was born as a movement seeking free and living congregations. These Norwegian immigrants promoted democracy in church life rather than ecclesiastical authority. They believed and practiced that all believers should be workers in kingdom of God.

This is the heritage of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. But why do we believe in the importance of empowering the laity?



## **I. Jesus focused on equipping and training people for ministry.**

When one examines the life and ministry of Christ, His fourfold focus of ministry becomes clear.

A. He lived a perfect life in obedience to the law.

B. He died a substitutionary death for our sins.

C. He rose again from the dead and ascended to the Father to sit at His right hand.

D. He called and trained the twelve for ministry.

Throughout His ministry Jesus developed lay people for ministry. In Matthew 9:35-38 Jesus traveled through the cities and saw suffering, pain and loss. In that context (chapter 10), He sent out His disciples — 70 of them in groups of two to do ministry. If we are to follow in His footsteps, we will also train and equip lay people for ministry.

## **II. The Apostle Paul focused on equipping lay people.**

In II Timothy 2:2, Paul told Timothy to “commit what you have heard from me to faithful men who will be able to teach others.” In every city where Paul started a church, he labored to develop a lay leadership team that could carry on the work after he left.

Paul himself was the product of Barnabas who took him under his tutelage and equipped and trained young Paul for ministry (Acts 13:26-27; 11:19-26; 13:1-13).

### **III. The Scriptures specifically charge pastors to train and equip lay people for ministry.**

In Ephesians 4:11-12 we are told that God has given the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors-teachers to the church for a very specific reason: to "equip the saints to do the work of ministry" which we are promised will result in the building up of the Body of Christ.

### **IV. Every believer has been saved in order to serve.**

When we receive God's free gift of salvation, we are then called to serve even as Christ served. As believers we have been given gifts and talents to use in the work of the kingdom of God. It is such a tremendous joy and delight to find one's "niche" so-to-speak. As we serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit, God works through us to accomplish His purposes. Phillippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Within the new nature is a great desire to serve and love people.

### **V. The legacy of the Free Lutheran movement has always focused on releasing lay people for ministry.**

Norway's Hans Nielson Hauge was a great example of a humble, yet powerful person for Christ. He was saved, then he was moved to great heights to share Christ with people, both through his life and business and also in his preaching and teaching.

The AFLC has had, from its beginnings in the 1960s, a great respect for lay men and women being involved in the leadership of the church, both locally as well as cooperatively.

### **VI. When pastors focus on involving lay people in ministry, new men are called into the pastorate role.**

A significant example of this was Pastor Fritjof Monseth of Valley City, North Dakota in the 1950s and '60s. By involving young men in simple, basic ministries, they were then led to answer God's call to full-time service. Pastors Fran Monseth, Gary and Tim Skramstad, John and Robert Rieth, plus many others discovered great joy in serving because Pastor Fritjof Monseth saw the value of equipping and training lay people for ministry.

If we are to have the impact God wants us to have on our world today, it is crucial that we seek to equip and train men and women for ministry. It may take a little longer at first because of the time and energy required — it always seems easier to do it ourselves — but the result of multiplying our ministries will have eternal rewards!



# **Partner with your pastor in prayer**

I thought I could begin this article and answer the question of "why pray for your pastor?" with a quick Bible verse. I assumed that I could pull out of the "Pastor's Installation Service" the place where the congregation promises to pray for their pastor, or where the pastor promises to pray for the congregation. I was wrong! Writing this article turned out to be less straightforward than I expected.

Recently I heard an interview with a group of church leaders on Christian radio. A comment struck me. During the year 1999, the Church of Satan is praying that 300 Christian leaders and their families will be destroyed. Does this give us incentive to pray for our pastors and church leaders, both local and national ones? It should!

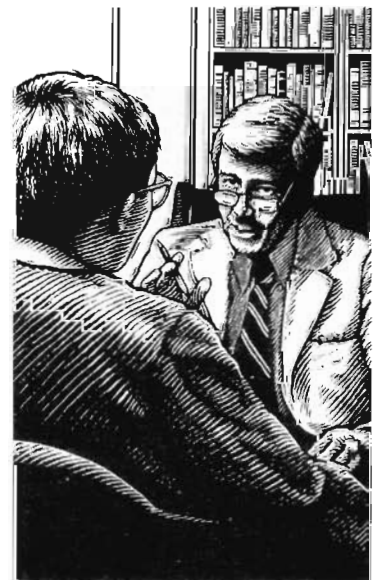
The New Testament writers ask to be prayed for a number of times in their letters. Hebrews 13:18 pleads, "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things." In II Thessalonians 3:1 Paul begs, "Finally brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may be spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you." There are many references like these. Scripture encourages us to pray for the pastor, yet many "Letters of Call" to pastors do not include a promise of prayer, either by the congregation for the pastor or by the pastor for the congregation!

Dear friends, prayer for your pastor and your congregational and denominational leaders is nothing short of essential. A great spiritual battle is going on. If your congregational leadership is not morally and spiritually strong, your church will not be able to do the work it is called to do in your community. If the pastor's family is not united and strong in Christ, he will not be able to function

(continued on next page)



— **Pastor James Rasmussen**  
**AFLC Director of Evangelism**



properly in his ministry. Whether he wishes it or not, his family is an example of Christian marriage and child-rearing to the whole community. This is especially true in smaller communities.

If the members of the flock are not praying, who will pray for the work of the kingdom in your community? Without prayer the pastor will meet spiritual defeat at every turn.

If your work in God's kingdom is not built on prayer, then we are operating as if we can accomplish it on our own! That is ridiculous. No human being can do anything in the kingdom in his own strength. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this work, as we humble ourselves and seek His strength. When it comes to the bottom line, any Christian is just a tool in His hand.

It is my prayer that many of you will begin to see the need to pray earnestly for your pastors. If every pastor had a number of people committed to praying for him, great work would be done in the churches. The greatest work of course, is the salvation of souls. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father" (John 14:12).

Will you consider going to your pastor personally and promising to partner with him in prayer — that is, covenant with him to pray for him every day?

Encourage others to come alongside your pastor too. It would be wonderful to get a group of seven people committed to praying for him. One person could be designated to pray each day of the week! I know that God would bless this, and your congregation would grow — first spiritually and then in numbers.

The story is told of D.L. Moody's meetings in London, England in 1872. During the 10 days of services, 400 new converts came into the church where he was preaching. Why did this happen? Many point to the prayers of a single bedridden girl, Marianne Adlard. She read a newspaper clipping about Moody's work in Chicago, and prayed that God would send him to her church. He did! The harvest was great.

Prayer is the hardest work of the church, says O. Hallesby in his book on prayer. Will you enter the work of the kingdom as a prayer partner for you pastor? God will bless you and He will use you, if you are willing to humble yourself before Him and beg Him to.



# Encouraging your pastor

*An interview with Sheldon Een, a council member at Helmar Lutheran Church, Helmar, Illinois. Sheldon and his wife Dorothy are long-time members of Helmar. After his retirement from farming, he keeps busy with his home-based business of custom-made furniture. Besides his involvement in his local congregation, he currently is helping with the preaching at Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Evergreen Park, Illinois.*

**Q What is your pastor's primary role?**

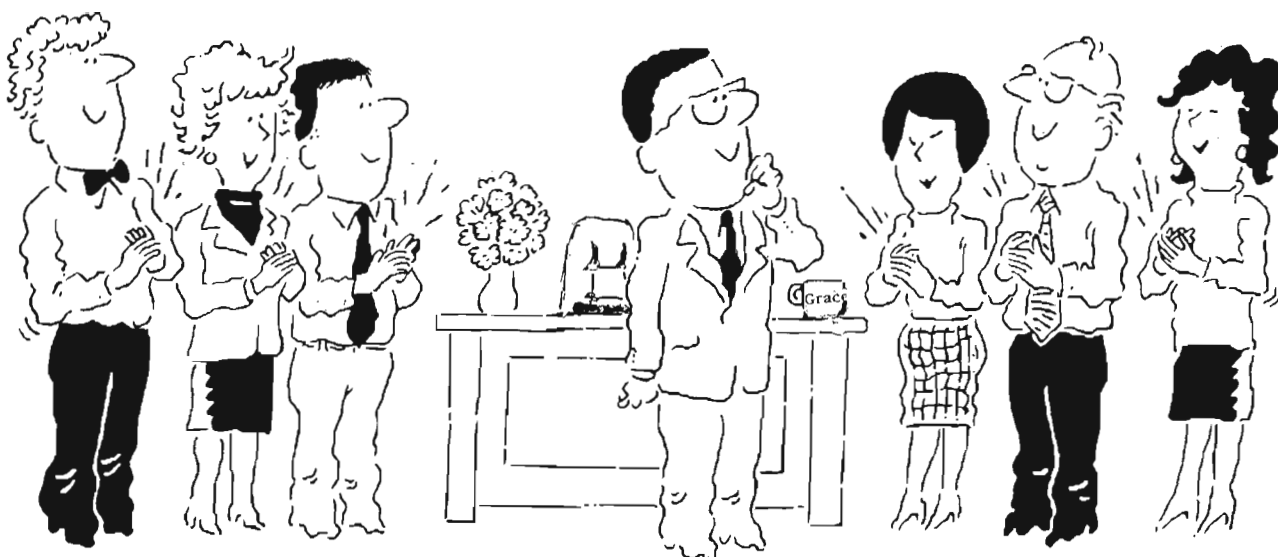
**A** Look at Acts 6:4 where it says, "devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." The pastor is to be a teacher, an instructor of the Word of God and we who know the Lord are to take it and apply it to our lives.

**Q How do you encourage your pastor?**

**A** The most important thing is that Dorothy and I have our pastor on the top of our prayer list. I think this is true for many in our congregation and that's why we've seen great things happen in our church.

Our pastor preaches the whole council of God and yes, sometimes it pinches. I often thank him or comment to him about the sermon. That shows him that I'm listening and if I comment about something, I'm more likely to apply it personally. I stand behind our pastor and I let him know it. That gives him courage as well. Occasionally I take Pastor out to breakfast where we share our joys and concerns. Before we move on to the day's work, we sit in the car and pray together. That is the underlying emphasis in our congregation — praying for one another and for the pastor, then God does the rest.





**Q How do you encourage your pastor to use his God-given gifts?**

**A** God has given him special gifts and it works so well to recognize his strengths. Others can step in too, though, and take part. It takes a real load off of him. When the pastor and lay people work as a team, it creates a special bond and unity and the church moves forward. It's wrong to just have the attitude that we hire our pastor to do these things. Each one of us has special gifts. Our pastor loves to preach and teach God's Word to people of all generations so they can understand. That's a God-given gift!

**Q With many people working and participating in leadership in the congregation, how do you avoid conflicts?**

**A** Two things. We on the church board openly discuss everything. A good way to kill a church is to say, "We've always done it that way." I'm an old-timer, but I know I need to encourage pastor to consider new suggestions. We discuss and pray about changes and as long as it is scriptural, we aren't afraid of change.

Farming changes in recent years have been phenomenal. Sometimes I was shy of implementing new ways until I saw the

results. In a similar way our rural congregation is becoming more suburban as new families move into our area and become a part of our church. We're seeing a new segment of our community attend church and lives are being changed as people come under the hearing of the Word.

Now we have home Bible studies. We are getting to know one another better and a special bond develops. It's hard to have strife when we pray together. Prayer simply takes care of that. We love each other and it shows. I visit a lot of churches and sometimes I feel no one would talk to me as a guest in their church if I were not a Gideon standing by the door with the open Bible. But I know many people will meet a new individual visiting our church on a Sunday morning. That's a real asset.

**Q What are the blessings that come?**

**A** Pastor goes and goes so I'm thankful to see him take time off. He needs it and we don't need him to be worn out. He's happy seeing people coming to the Lord and growing in Christ. It keeps him rejuvenated. We are experiencing a growing church and thank the Lord for what He is doing. Together we ask the Lord and one another what we can do to improve our ministry to the community.



# The church is a choir where

— *Loiell Dyrud*  
*Our Saviour's*  
*Lutheran*  
*Thief River Falls,*  
*Minnesota*

**H**ans Nielson Hauge was a peasant farmer in Norway at the turn of the nineteenth century. Shortly before his time the Norwegian Conventicle Act was passed in 1741. It forbade lay preaching, reserving all spiritual activities to the clergy. Through this act the state church attempted to curtail Moravian influences in Norway. As time went on, it was used more against its own laity. Ecclesiastical leaders now dominated the church.

## **The influence of a layman named Hauge**

In 1796, at the age of twenty-five, Hauge was plowing in his father's field and singing his favorite hymn, "Jesus, I Long for Thy Blessed Communion," when he had a spiritual experience that he could hardly explain. "I had a completely transformed mind, a sorrow over all sins, a burning desire that others should share the same grace."

From that point on he began sharing his testimony — first with his sister, then with his neighbors, and finally from village to village, crisscrossing Norway. He preached repentance and urged the common people to read their Bibles and share their testimonies of what Christ had done for them.

His preaching was a violation of the Conventicle Act, and he was imprisoned on several occasions, the longest being a ten-year stretch. Prison broke his health, and he died in 1824, but the movement that bears his name could not be stopped.

Though the Conventicle Act was finally repealed, Norway's clergy, for the most part, despised the idea of the laity involved in the spiritual life of the church. This forced many of Hauge's followers to meet in homes and "mission houses" which are active to this day.

## **Sverdrup's vision of laymen serving**

It was into this context, one short generation later, that Georg Sverdrup, the eventual founder of the Lutheran Free Church, was born in 1844. From the days of his youth at the University of Oslo, he was sympathetic to the Hauge movement. Little

wonder that when he came to America in 1874 to build "A Free Church in a Free Land," based on New Testament teachings, he included an emphasis on lay activity.

Sverdrup abhorred the fact that Hauge had been imprisoned by the state church for doing what was expected of a Christian in the New Testament. That the clergy in some American Lutheran synods held the laity in as low regard as they did in Norway was equally upsetting. In his writings as early as 1877, Sverdrup stressed the importance of lay activities in the congregation. In "The Heritage of Faith," translated by Melvin Heland, Sverdrup states: "But meetings for mutual edification where lay people both pray and exhort one another, seem to be the object of bitter hate on the part of many pastors. Yet it is impossible to understand how one can find room for the exercise of spiritual gifts unless such meetings are held. ... The gatherings of the first Christians were essentially of this character, and whenever in the history of the church there has been any spiritual life, the desire for such gatherings has been so strong that neither pastors nor police regulations could prevent them. ... We rejoice over every congregation where such gatherings are held, and we are saddened by the groups of people who claim the name 'congregation' but do not possess any spiritual gifts by which they can edify one another."

## **Make use of all the gifts**

Twenty years later in 1897, when he and Sven Oftedal wrote the "Fundamental Principles," Principle 6 specifically advocated lay activities: "A free and independent congregation esteems and cherishes all the gifts of the Spirit which the Lord confers upon it for its own edification, and seeks to stimulate and encourage their use." In "The Lutheran Free Church," Eugene Fevold explains the purpose of this principle: "According to Sverdrup, the chief concern of Article 6 is the utilization and encouragement of the varied spiritual gifts with which the lay membership of the congregation is endowed. 'For all believers, big and little, young and old, men and women, are to be



# everyone sings

workers in the vineyard.' A 'living' congregation is one in which the lay forces are mobilized and utilized."

Sverdrup looked upon lay activity as a necessity for "purifying" the congregation as is pointed out by James S. Hamre in "Georg Sverdrup: Educator, Theologian, Churchman": "Sverdrup felt 'Not only should the congregation use the gifts that are found in it; it is also incumbent upon the congregation to enliven, encourage, elicit, and call forth the gifts.' Sverdrup related this emphasis on active service to continuous purification. He felt that if everyone were encouraged to be involved in spiritual work, the 'worldly elements' in the congregation would find themselves quite cramped and would not be able to settle down in a 'false security.'"

## The proper relationship between laymen and pastor

To what extent are lay activities to be promoted in the congregation and what happens if laymen elevate themselves over the pastor? Perhaps, the finest metaphor Sverdrup uses to explain the proper relationship between the laity and the pastor is when he compares the congregation to a choir and the pastor to its leader. "The congregation is not organized unless there is work for all. It is not for a congregation to hire a preacher to work for it, so they themselves can escape their duty. No, the congregation in this way is likened to a choir who has to have a song leader to instruct and lead. Shall the instructor sing alone? Shall not all join in? Such is the congregation; it is a gathering of God's servants who work for God's Kingdom, for Christ's cause. The leader is not superfluous, but is the more necessary so that they may sing in unison."

Sverdrup stresses this point often; never is the laity to view itself as being superior to the pastor. It is as wrong for the laity to denigrate the role of the pastor as it is for the pastor to denigrate the work of the laity. They work together, and the pastor is the leader, even as the choir director leads the choir.

Clarence J. Carlsen in his 1942 history of the LFC, "The Years of Our Church," com-

ments further on the relationship of the pastor and the laity according to the sixth Fundamental Principle. "The Christian congregation is looked upon as a fellowship of Christian people in which all believers have a task to do in the work of the kingdom of God, according to the gift which the Holy Spirit has given each one of them. The pastor is their voluntarily chosen leader; he is not their substitute. He works with them and they with him, each according to his or her spiritual endowments. He should not either intentionally or unintentionally supplant or ignore them or their talents, but seek to foster and encourage the use of every gift which the Lord has given His church."

In the 1945 Diamond Anniversary booklet entitled "Freedom and Christian Education," which celebrates the 75th year of Augsburg College and Seminary, President B.M. Christensen delivered a message called, "The Idea of the Lutheran Free Church." During that speech he said, "Use should be made not only of the ordained ministry, but also of laymen. We recognize that the church cannot do its work effectively without an adequate ministry, but we recognize also the perils of the church in which spiritual expression is limited to the trained and the ordained. The gifts of the Spirit of God are not confined to those who have seminary training."

How active are our lay people today? How many of our AFLC congregations have slipped into a sort of "Robin's Nest" mentality? We go to church on Sunday morning and sit complacently in our

pews like so many baby robins waiting to be "fed" by our pastor, without ever getting involved in the spiritual



work of the congregation. And then we wonder why our congregations remain immature and lacking spiritual growth.

To extend Sverdrup's metaphor: have we become content to let the pastor sing solos while the choir remains silent? Think how beautiful the music would be if the whole choir were singing.



# Help children worship through family devotions

Ask the pastor for the Scripture readings in advance of the Sunday service. Many churches follow a pericope outline. Read and discuss these Scripture passages throughout the week to prepare for hearing them on Sunday. Remember that Christ is the central theme of all Scripture. For more in-depth study, look up cross-references, research historical background, and use maps to point out the geographical locations where the events are taking place. A concordance, Bible handbook, and Bible atlas are valuable tools for every family.

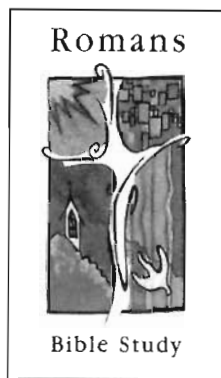
Select a theme verse from the Scripture readings to memorize together. Review the verse daily as a family and in personal contact with the children. Help children to become familiar with all the books of the Bible. Demonstrate a love and respect for the Word of God through your words and actions.

Find out what the hymns will be for the coming Sunday and select one to sing throughout the week. Many hymns are rich with theology and will help to teach all ages the truths of God's Word. Take time to study a hymn phrase by phrase and find Scripture passages that the hymn is rooted in. Also teach the background history of the hymn, which will enrich the understanding of why it was written and provide an example of saints who have persevered in the faith. Use the hymnal as a regular devotional tool including Scripture readings, prayers, confessions, creeds, and indexes.

Help children to understand the Church year calendar and follow the meaning of the different celebrations throughout the year. The Church year is divided into two parts.

The first half is the festival cycle, which begins with Advent and focuses on the life of Christ including three festivals: Christmas, East-

## Parish Education update



The adult Bible study on Romans is now ready for publication and will be printed when funds are available. Approximately \$5,000 is needed for this project.

\* Christmas programs for 1999 are available from the parish

education office. A letter will be sent with recommendations and descriptions in September to AFLC Sunday school superintendents. Call for more information.

\* Parish education has received a request for audio tapes of sermons. In response, our department would like to compile a list of congregations who keep a library of these cassette tapes and would be willing to make copies of the tapes available to other AFLC churches. This list would be available to individuals and congregations upon request. If your congregation is able to assist, please contact us.

er and Pentecost. The second half (non-festival) is called the Trinity season and emphasizes the teachings of Christ and the life of the believer.

Discuss the meanings of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and Apostles' Creed using the catechism as a guide. Saying them without understanding can be meaningless repetition, but when their teachings are understood, they can greatly enrich spiritual life.

Encourage every family member to share questions and thoughts from the Bible teachings in the service or from devotions. Help children apply to their daily lives the truths being learned.

— **Marian J. Christopherson**  
**AFLC Parish Education Director**

**AFLC Shepherds' Prayer Summits** for pastors have been made available by a grant from AAL. Bethany Bible Camp in Bemidji, Minnesota, and Cup of Cold Water Center in Norway, Illinois recently hosted summits and two more are scheduled.

One will be conducted at Shalom Hill Retreat Center in Windom, Minnesota, October 31 to November 2 and there will be one in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area November 28-30.

## Fall WMF Rallies

**Northern Michigan —**

September 18, Hope Free, Ishpeming

**Eastern North Dakota —**

September 25, Ny Stavanger, Buxton (corrected from 8/24/99 AMBASSADOR)

**Northwestern Minnesota —**

October 9, Our Savior's, Argyle

## AAL gives grant to WMF

The AFLC's women's organization was given a \$5,000 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans. The money will fund a series of workshops to educate women about the church and its mission work. Additional promotional materials will be produced, and exhibits and a computer will be purchased to advance and support the mission of the federation.

## Order your 2000 WMF Bible Studies now!

"Spiritual Shape-up" is the title of the new women's Bible study written by Kathie Klenner of Freeman, South Dakota. The cost is \$3 each for five or more and \$5 for less than five. Order before September 30 from Cheryl Aakre, Rt. 1, Box 98, Stephen, MN 56757.

## Bible school student body has international look

The 1999 fall quarter at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School began with student orientation on September 4. Eighty-two first-year students arrived on the Medicine Lake campus and 14 of them claim their homeland outside of the U.S. Eastern European students are the majority with four from Russia, four from Latvia, three from the Czech Republic and one from Slovakia. The East European Missions Network Student Scholarship Fund has already provided tremendous assistance to these students. Pastor Don Richman is the director of EEMN, based in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Fifty seniors have returned along with two part-time seniors to complete the student enrollment for AFLBS.

## VISION 2004 update

### — Seminary Housing Unit —

We have had some delays as seen through our eyes, but in reality they turned out to be God's perfect timing which resulted in saving the project money. At the writing of this letter, Mr. John Presteng from Grafton, North Dakota, is framing the unit, and the other sub-contractors are ready to go. By God's grace the seminary housing unit will be completed by November 1 or before. We praise the Lord that most of the money for this unit has already come in and we are asking Him to provide the rest before it is completed. The housing unit is pictured to the right.

### — Student Center —

The next phase is the building of the student center (classrooms, offices, library, cafeteria) along with the remodeling of the existing dorms and the rest of the site work. We will then be able to accommodate about 200 students rather than the current capacity of 145.

We would, by the grace of God, like to start construction of this stage early in the spring of 2000. In order for this construction to start we need 75% of five million dollars to be given in cash or pledges — or if

## OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

## Gifted children

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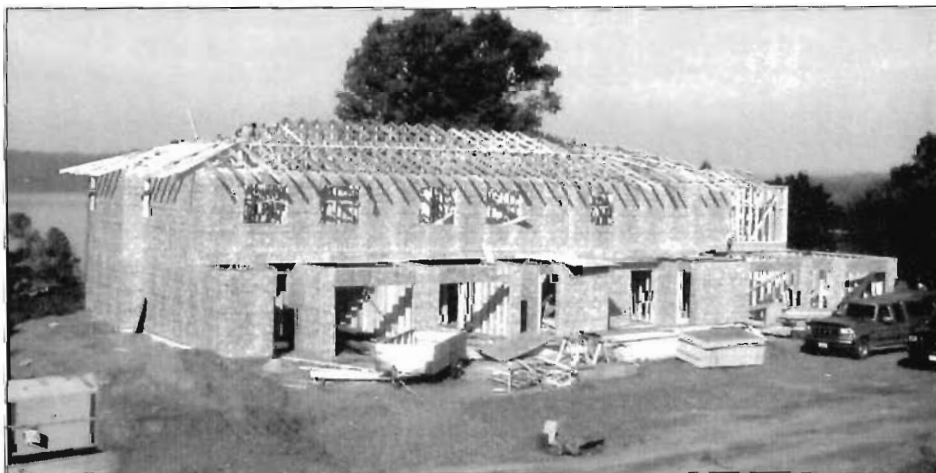
There are only gifted children in God's family. Everyone is above average. This is the clear teaching of God's Word. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good ... giving to each individual exactly as He pleases" (I Corinthians 12:7,11).

Our "Fundamental Principles" include several references to the giftedness of God's children. The second principle states that the congregation consists of believers "who, by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men." Spiritual gifts are to be esteemed and cherished, the sixth principle reads, and their use is to be stimulated and encouraged. The eighth principle mentions "the mutual sharing of Spiritual gifts" among congregations through conferences, exchange visits, lay activities, etc." as well as in "voluntary and Spirit-prompted cooperation of congregations for accomplishing of such tasks as exceed the ability of the individual congregation."

The reality of spiritual gifts within the family of God releases us from a clergy-centered concept of ministry, and reinforces a correct understanding of the priesthood of all believers. To declare that all of God's children are gifted is to say that all are called and equipped for ministry. A distinction between clergy and laity is certainly scriptural, since all do not have the same gifts, yet this distinction must never be used to limit ministry to ordained pastors.

Ministry means service. Our gifts are given by God, not for personal advancement but for "the common good" (I Corinthians 7:11) or "a means of helping the entire church" as the Living Bible paraphrases. The gift that benefits me the most, as a friend once stated, is the one that someone else has. Pastors and lay people are privileged to serve together ... not in the same ways, but empowered by the same Spirit in the same endeavor — building free and living congregations.

— Pastor Robert L. Lee



God so chooses, the entire five million! We need to make a decision by February 1, 2000, whether we will go ahead with the student center or wait another year. Colored drawings have been made available to each local AFLC church. We hope your

church bulletin board is a visual reminder to pray and give as the Lord leads.

Thank you for your partnership in prayer and support. God is in control!

## Greenbush, Minnesota, July 10-11, 1999

"Looking Back on God's Blessings, Pressing Forward in God's Grace" was the theme for the weekend of Oiland Free Lutheran's centennial celebration, July 10-11, 1999. The theme verse was Psalm 105:1, "O give thanks unto the Lord: call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people."

After much work and anticipation the weekend's festivities began with a confirmation banquet. Former Pastor Martin Christensen, Elbow, Saskatchewan, shared with the 138 guests. Free Lutheran Seminary student and son of the congregation, Todd Erickson spoke on John 20, at the Sunday morning worship service. It was followed by dinner and the afternoon anniversary service where Pastor Robert Lee, president of the AFLC spoke and the anniversary choir sang. After a coffee reception there was a heavenly hoe-down (gospel jam) with many participants.

The congregation began having temporary services in 1897, but was officially organized as part of the Lutheran Free Church in 1899. The church was given the name, "Oiland." This name in Norwegian means "island" and if you would visit, especially in the spring, you would know why the name was chosen. The church sits on sometimes what seems like an island amidst the water about 10 miles northeast of Greenbush.

The Oiland church was built in 1906 at a cost of \$1200. The first pastor was Jonas L. Bestul. The oldest living confirmand of the congregation Clara (Hagen) Halvorson now resides in Mesa, Arizona. She was confirmed in 1918. Hector Graff, confirmation class of 1919, has many memories of the early church. He tells of the pastor arriving late because of poor roads. While waiting, the students would race their horses or ring the bell but when the pastor was sighted, all activity would cease. A barn for the pastor's horses was located on the corner of the churchyard. Once a year the lawn was mowed and hay stacked for his horses. One summer the stack was struck by lightning and burned so consequently the parishioners had to supply the hay.

In 1940 a chancel was built and furnishings purchased for the altar area. Twelve years later, a separate dining hall was built. Then in 1966 the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. The dining hall was saved along with a few items from the church. A vacated church was purchased and moved onto the original foundation. The church was not large enough for Oiland's growing membership so in 1977, an addition was added to the sanctuary and a Sunday school classroom.

Oiland was part of a seven-point

## Two congregations celebrate 100 years

parish for many decades. Since 1972 Oiland has been a part of a two-point parish with Badger Creek Free Lutheran in nearby Badger. In 1987 the parish, with inspiration from student pastor Tom Olson, raised funds and built a beautiful parsonage in Badger. Five years ago the congregation completed construction on a new attached dining hall and recently the church yard has been enhanced by a stately brick pillar and chain link fence. The original bell is displayed on a brick and metal lighted church sign.

After joining the AFLC in 1963, pastors who have served Oiland have been: Sidney Swenson, Orville Olson, Walter Beaman, Burton Rygh, Gustav Nordvall, Tom Olson, Martin Christensen, and Alan Arneson, the present pastor who has served since 1993.

Oiland has worship services every Sunday, and an active Sunday school, youth group, and Ladies' Aid. They also meet for Season of Praise services/church activities every three months. This summer Oiland had a summer outreach program called Backyard Bible Clubs that met on Wednesday evenings for preschool through 4th grade.

It is with great joy that we continue to worship, pray, use our talents and reach out to others for the Lord. We covet your prayers in the future that we may continue to serve Him. The late Pastor Nordvall said, "A determined people, with a will, will perpetuate the work of God's kingdom." Yes, may all who come behind us, find us faithful!



Pastors and families present at the Oiland anniversary.

**Durant, Oklahoma** — Faith Lutheran installed their first pastor on September 12 in a service led by AFLC President Robert Lee. Pastor Gary Jorgenson has begun his ministry in this home mission congregation located north of Dallas, Texas. The new address for the Jorgensons is: 318 Plum, Durant, OK 74701; phone: (580) 931-3450.

## Bemidji, Minnesota, August 8, 1999

Trinity Lutheran Church was organized May 20, 1899, as a member of the Lutheran Free Church. Reverend L.O. Opsata was the first pastor. Later that summer, it was decided to pay the pastor a salary of \$25.00 a year for eight services. It was also decided to buy a ministerial book for the congregation. Mr. and Mrs. O. Soland donated five acres of land to the congregation located 11 miles northwest of Bemidji, Minnesota. At the annual meeting held on November 20, 1900, a building committee was elected. Income from 1899 and 1900 was \$66.35 from individuals and two basket socials. After expenses there was a balance of \$1.70. The church building was begun in the spring of 1906. Reverend Opsata held the first church services in the new church building and confirmed a class of five. The first baptism was performed on May 4, 1906.

At the annual meeting in 1923, it was decided that each member would give lumber for the building of the church tower. In 1934 the congregation began holding alternating English and Norwegian services. The English services were held in the evening. The building of the chancel was completed in the fall of 1949, and the parish hall in 1967, followed by more recent addi-

tions and updates. Other milestones were in 1955 when the constitution was amended to give voting rights to women and in 1963 when the congregation became one of the early groups to join the new AFLC. Pastor Marvin Undseth was called as the first pastor of the congregation after it joined the AFLC. He was followed

by pastors Walter Beaman, Dennis O'Neil and the current pastor, William Goodman, who has served the congregation since 1990.

The congregation is grateful to the founders and leaders for their convictions and faith in building on the Word of God. To God be the glory for these first 100 years!



## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Chillicothe, Illinois** — Our Saviors Lutheran voted on June 27, 1999 to close their church. The twelve-year-old congregation had been off home mission subsidy for over two years and for the past eight months had been without a pastor. According to member Randy Sommer, "As we looked at our situation, we were in unity to consider the best use of resources. It's sad, yet it is a new time. God's hand was clearly leading us in our beginning and allowed our congregation to touch a lot of lives during its existence. Many of us were brought through a difficult time and grew in the Lord ourselves."

**Arlington, Washington** — On September 13, Pastor Tom Olson of Naknek, Alaska and Lavon Bohling, Deshler, Nebraska departed for Naknek in the refurbished Cessna 150. Mr. Bohling is the safety instructor on the Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters (FLAPS) board and he is also a board member of the Missionary Aviation Training Academy of Arlington, Washington.

**El Campo, Texas** — Faith Lutheran has pews and altar furniture to give away. For more information call 409-543-1842.

**Ponca City, Oklahoma** — Good Shepherd Lutheran hosted 101 kids at their vacation Bible school during the first week of August. The Southern Barnabas team assisted the congregation with the innovative VBS located at a "Kids' Castle" — an indoor recreational facility. In the previous four-year history of the congregation, 35 kids had been the average attendance. Good Shepherd sold their church facility on September 3 to First Baptist Church which is planning to use it for their Hispanic mission. Good Shepherd is renting a church building at 1085 E. Tower Rd., three miles north of Ponca City on Hwy. 77. The mailing address is P.O. Box 2291, Ponca City, OK 74602.



Vacation Bible school ministries touched many lives for Jesus this past summer. Pictured above is the group at Lisbon, North Dakota, where Kathi Anderson of Grace Lutheran in Valley City spearheads a community vacation Bible school. Their activities included the kids visiting the elderly and helping with the Meals-on-Wheels program. During their vacation Bible school, Word of Life Lutheran in Upsala, Minnesota, sent Spanish versions of the Gospel of John to missionaries Dan and Deb Giles to distribute in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico.





**Lincoln, Illinois** — Pictured above is Good Shepherd Lutheran which held their first service in their new church on July 25, 1999. One week later they dedicated their building with AFLC President Robert Lee officiating. The congregation began less than two years ago and broke ground last September 27. They built the facility primarily with volunteer help.

**Pastor Craig Johnson**, who has been serving the home mission congregation Willamette Free Lutheran in Beaverton, Oregon, has accepted the call to serve as pastor of Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Oregon. Willamette Free Lutheran, which has been going for two years, has stopped having Sunday morning services. It is hoped that a small group home Bible study will be continuing on. Pastor Johnson's new address will be 575 34th Street, Astoria, OR 97103. His office phone is 503-325-2925. He will continue serving as editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

**Pastor Ted Berkas**, Wallace, South Dakota, has begun serving as interim pastor of New Hope Lutheran Church in Snohomish, Washington.

**Pastor Mauritz and Idella Lundeen**, Brandon, Minnesota celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at their farm home on August 22, 1999.

**Pastor Walter and Marilyn Johnson**, Shakopee, Minnesota, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on September 4, 1999.

**Jeremy Erickson**, Morris, Minnesota, (AFLBS 1996 graduate) is scheduling a drive up the West Coast from Arizona to Washington between the months of January and April of the new year. His aim is to minister to congregations and youth groups through teaching, worship, and a concert ministry aimed to both comfort and challenge believers into a closer walk with God and a more aggressive ministry to the lost. Willing to spend several days in one congregation, and ready to do just about anything, Jeremy can be reached to serve you at 612-839-6785 or by e-mail at dockcrew@juno.com.

### South Dakota and Wisconsin churches celebrate 10 years

Abiding Savior Lutheran in Sioux Falls, South Dakota celebrated their 10th anniversary during the month of August with various events. Pastor Michael Brandt serves the congregation.

Trinity Lutheran in Janesville, Wisconsin is celebrating their 10th anniversary on September 26. Pastor Curt Emerson serves the congregation. Both churches began as AFLC home mission congregations.

### Two pastors attend police chaplains' conference

The International Conference of Police Chaplains held its 26th annual training seminar in Columbus, Ohio during July 19-23, 1999. The Columbus and Dublin Police Departments hosted the event. AFLC pastors attending were: Chaplain Gary Skramstad of the St. Cloud, Minnesota Police Department and Chaplain J. Christian Andrews of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. More than 650 law enforcement chaplains and their families attended. They represented a variety of denominations from the U.S., Canada, and South Africa.

**Vernon, British Columbia** — Living Word Lutheran hosted the Annual Canadian Pastor/Layman's Retreat on September 6-11. Pastor Al Monson, Lakeville, Minnesota; AFLC Home Missions Director Paul Nash and Evangelism Director James Rasmussen, led the sessions which included training in Miracle Mile ministry, Lighthouse Prayer, and Friend to Friend Evangelism.

### AFLC Memorials

**Department given to —**  
*in memory of —*

#### World Missions

*Joseph Nygard  
Emma Sakariason  
Jim Hollingsworth*

#### Home Missions

*Ray Kummer  
Kathy Sorenson  
Jon Leibelt  
Margie Stroklund*

#### General Fund

*Darlene Miller*

#### Youth Ministries

*Rosie Johnson*

#### Ministry Training Institute

*Harvey Dyrud*

#### AFLBS

*Bert Borgandale  
Anna Sorem  
Irene Feddersen*

#### AFLTSS

*Rev. Oscar Laaveg  
Nita Hutto  
Rose Bock*



# Trust earned, trust given



Trust is the glue of relationships. It holds the members of a congregation together and helps them endure the trials that inevitably come. This trust involves being dependable, and also willing to be dependent.

## Trust is earned

We should not expect others to trust us simply because we are taking up space on the planet. Instead we must earn the trust of the fellow members of our congregation.

Jesus told a parable about a man who entrusted his property to his servants while he went on a journey. When he returned he found that the man who had received five talents had gained five more. He said, "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (Matthew 25:20, NIV).

Leaders of a congregation need to have the trust of the people, yet it should not be assumed that trust will come because of the position occupied. The leaders must be faithful servants; trustworthy with the few things they are given, knowing that is the way they will be put in charge of more. Leaders "must first be tested" (I Timothy 3:10, NIV).

Our congregations need leaders — leaders who are willing and able to take courageous stands and cast a vision as to where we should go. But we need leaders who are willing to also do the humble and hard work of being servants; demonstrating that they are putting the needs of the congregation ahead of their own desires.

As we look at ourselves let us remember that trust must be earned. As we look at others, however, we remember that trust is to be given.

## Trust is given

It is easy to be suspicious, to wonder if that person will do the job, if they will come through as they said. It is also destructive and brought on by pride. We may think we are being a servant when we adopt the attitude: "I better do it myself to be sure it gets done right." In actuality we might be rather arrogant, thinking we are superior to others and the only one around who can be counted on. We need to learn to humbly depend on others and give them our trust.

Jesus knew better than anyone how weak and prone to failure were His disciples. And yet He gave them responsibilities. They were "like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3, NIV), but He still sent them out to

do important work. Even after His resurrection "some doubted," but Jesus still said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:17, 19, NIV). Peter failed to keep his boastful claim that he would follow Jesus to end. He hadn't proven himself to be very trustworthy, and yet Jesus told him, "Feed my lambs ... Take care of my sheep" (John 21:15, 16, NIV).

The Apostle Paul knew that the work of spreading the good news was beyond him. He needed to share the load, and he knew others could capably serve. He told Timothy to "guard what has been entrusted to your care" (I Timothy 6:20, NIV). Timothy was young and had much to learn, but Paul still trusted him with important responsibilities. He wanted him to do the same as he told him, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (II Timothy 2:2, NIV). Paul told another partner in the work of spreading the gospel to "appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5, NIV).

Paul did not view himself as the only one who could do the work. He found others in whom God was working and then trusted them with significant responsibilities.

## Why we can trust

The reason Paul entrusted others with responsibilities was not primarily because they had proven themselves to be so worthy. He trusted God.

He met for the last time with the leaders of the church in the city of Ephesus and told of the trials and attacks that would come their way. He knew he would not see them again and would not be around to protect them. Yet his attitude is not one of despair. He says, "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, NIV).

He entrusted responsibilities to them, because he had entrusted them to God. He doesn't have to be around to watch over everything. He knows the Lord is present. They have the Word and Spirit of God. That is sufficient. He doesn't fear what might happen with someone else in charge, because he knows ultimately God is in charge.

The Lord has a significant place of service for each of us. Let us strive to be dependable and faithful in that place. Let us also encourage others to find their place, trusting God to work through them and care for His church.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

**"The Lord has a significant place of service for each of us."**

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BUILDING THE BASE

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## Enslaved in freedom

**T**his year we have been looking at the word “freedom” and have learned that our spiritual freedom is God’s work. It was accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross and guaranteed by His resurrection. That is the Gospel message. We rejoice in that message much the same way as the Israelites rejoiced in Exodus 15:1b, “I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.” Whether saved as an infant, or later in life, that is our song as believers. We sing to the Lord, for He has set us free.

But why has He set us free? Romans 6:22 says, “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

When I read that verse, the first thought that comes to my mind is, “Now I need to do work for God.” Ephesians 2:10 makes me think the same thing, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” And so, naturally, we begin to do “God’s work.”

We do it very joyfully at first. Then maybe we see someone that doesn’t seem to be working as hard as we are, and we get discouraged.

Maybe we then read about the disciples working so hard they didn’t even have time to eat, (Mark 6:31), and we decide we don’t have it that bad, and so we keep working. Perhaps another Christian comes along and encourages us to go to this or that conference or retreat where we can be remotivated. So we go and become motivated, but after a few months the motivation is gone again.

We know that cycle don’t we? I have seen it in other believers, and I have seen it in myself. We become enslaved in our freedom.

This issue of “The Ambassador” deals with the roles of lay people and the pastor. It seems to me that as believers, none of us is free from enslavement in freedom. We easily become trapped into thinking that our role in the body of Christ is a requirement that God has mandated that we fulfill. So where is the error in this thinking?

First of all, we error in using the law of God to motivate us. If a verse tells us to do something, it is law. We have already learned that the power that sets us free and gives us daily strength is only found in the gospel. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” The law can point out to the believer what work needs to be done, but the law does not give us the power

or strength to do it.

Second, we error in thinking that the work is our work. Ephesians 2:10 says that God prepared good works beforehand that we should walk in them.

Third, we error in thinking that maintaining our faith and freedom is at least somewhat dependent on what we do. In Galatians 3:3, Paul asks, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now perfected by the flesh?” Sanctification is God’s work.

In conclusion, whatever role God has given you, whether a shepherd of a congregation, or a shepherd of sheep, the only way for the yoke to be easy and the burden light is by faith in Christ and what He did on the cross. Philippians 1:6 says, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”



— Jon Dryburgh  
Trinity Lutheran  
Grand Forks, North Dakota