

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

September 22, 1998

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the heart of
the church p.4

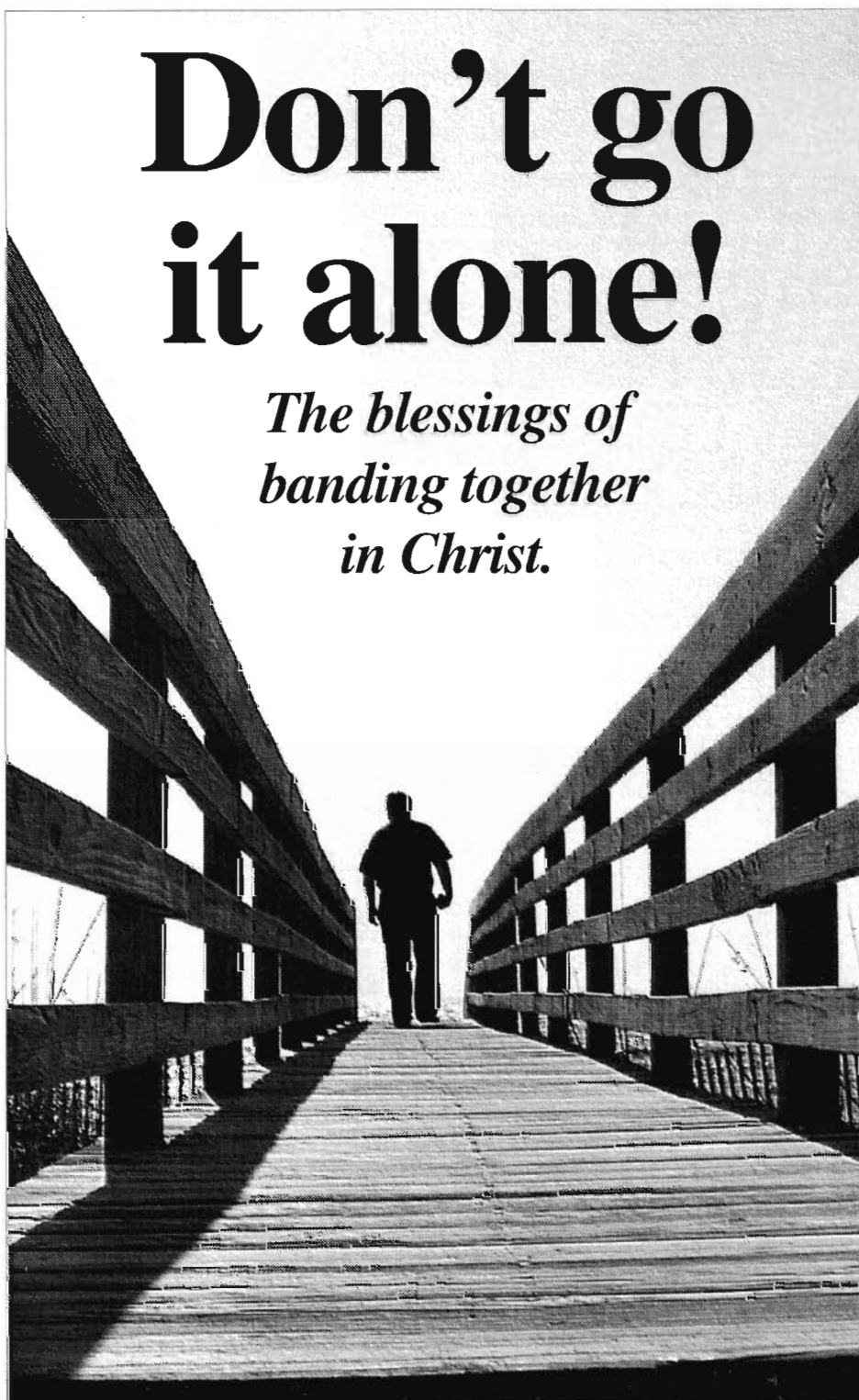
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Don't go it alone!

*The blessings of
banding together
in Christ.*



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

God does provide

"Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:3,4).

Before Karen and I were married she had a great desire to travel to Brazil and visit the mission field. She had been a very close friend of the son of a missionary who had grown up in Brazil. Because of this relationship she had always hoped to travel there and see the work. Therefore I agreed that we could go there shortly after we were married. I had no idea how we would get there or where the money would come from. But engaged men make many promises to their brides. Unfortunately, not all are kept.

After we were married, we started planing for our trip. We made an appointment with a travel agent, who was only too eager to plan a trip to South America. The trip included stops in Colorado, Florida, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Iguaçu Falls, Campo Mourão, Asuncion, and Panama City. He booked our rooms in the hotels in each city and everything was planned. After we paid the bill for our tickets, our bank account looked like a Minnesota snow drift in July: nonexistent.

We still needed spending money for this prolonged journey. This trip was to be God's training camp for me to see that He hears and answers prayer. Together we prayed for the money we needed for the trip. We realized that I would be getting a bonus from my employer in the future, but we could never count on the time it would come. Often we could ask the accountants about the bonus and they would give you the run around; the money would come months later.

The firm that did the accounting was located about one hundred miles from our first stop in Colorado. I called and asked them if they would hold my bonus so that I

could pick it up in person. I realized we would never have it in time if we waited for them to send it.

Finally the day came for our departure. We left with only a couple hundred dollars in our pockets, holding on to our faith in the fact that God would answer our prayers. We believed He would make sure the bonus would be there when we went in to pick it up. If it was not there, the trip would come to a crashing halt.

When we got to the accounting firm, we were led from one place to another looking for the check, all the time praying under our breath. Finally we got to the desk of a person who said, "Oh yes, I remember that." After searching through the piles on the desk, sure enough, there was the envelope with the check. Our prayers were answered and we continued on our trip.

I always like to think of this as the vacation where I left with a couple hundred dollars, and returned with a couple thousand. We were so overjoyed with God's generosity, that we could give generously to the mission work in Brazil when we returned.

Has God laid upon your heart to do something that is beyond your capability? Trust Him for the strength, walk through the doors as He opens them, and give Him all the glory.



*Taken from the book Blessings
by Del Palmer
Faith Lutheran
Shakopee, Minnesota*

sound bites

In a culture where time is always lacking and communication skills are minimal, people may not even know

1 how to go about establishing meaningful relationships with friendly people. The Church has the chance to establish community by offering outlets that create and nurture real relationships.

— George Barna

I have decided to make some friends. It will mean I have to stay home. It will mean I have to spend time with someone doing absolute-

4 ly nothing. It will mean I have to work at something that is not easy for me.

Instead of building a ministry to thousands, maybe we ought to build a friendship with one. Instead of speaking 200 times a year, maybe we should be known as someone who knows how to have friends.

— Mike Yaconelli

2

In spite of what we have seen and heard in our highly individualistic culture, it is clear that Christ never wanted His disciples to live out their Christian lives alone.

— Geoff Gorsuch

Once we open our world to another man, we learn that we are not alone in our fears, insecurities, uncertainties and desires.

3 ... Frank and honest exchanges of experiences allow us to gain a fresh and clear perspective on ourselves.

— Dr. Ken Druck

Each church is a gathering of God's carefully chosen and loved people. A summit meeting of royalty. Part of what Jesus Christ solemnly promised to build. The only institution worthy to stand not only in this age but the next.

5

— Kevin Miller

6

A soul which remains alone ... is like a burning coal which is left by itself: it will grow colder rather than hotter.

— John of the Cross

❀ *Small groups:* the heart of the church ❀

Many times when we think of the lifeblood of the church our thought immediately goes to Sunday morning when we gather as a body of believers to worship and hear the Word of the Lord preached. We may also look to Sunday school or perhaps the Wednesday night program and Bible study. All of these are healthy and integral to the life of the church. If you have not yet been involved in a small group Bible study or prayer group, however, I challenge you to join one and see why small groups are the lifeblood of the church.

Small groups within the church may be formed in many different ways and with many different purposes. What is important is that the larger body of believers (the church) breaks into smaller groups to build more intimate relationships with our fellow believers. It is difficult on a given Sunday for believers to dig much deeper than our surface greetings of "How are you doing?" "Fine ... Have a great week."

The early church worshiped together in homes, which provided an intimate setting and allowed for close fellowship.



Jesus Himself saw the need to select a small group of twelve individuals to develop a closer relationship with.

My wife Cindy and I participated in a small group Homebuilders study designed by Family Life, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. This group of married couples delved into the difficult areas of marriage and how to build a strong marital relationship. Not all the couples were from the same church, nor did we know each other well. But after a couple of sessions we shared freely, studied God's Word, and encouraged each other to build Scripture-based marriages. Many of us were visibly changed as we shared together and strengthened our marriages through God's Word.

Small groups can be quite diverse. In our church, Good Shepherd Free Lutheran of Cokato, Minnesota we have formed small groups for Bible study off and on for the past several years. These groups may end over a

When two or three are gathered:

"I tried everything before I gave my life to Christ — all sorts of sects and religions. On the outside my life looked ideal. I was a successful business woman and had a happy marriage. I had been raised in a church, but I was only an intellectual Christian. It hadn't reached my heart. The Holy Spirit kept nudging me. I was restless and apprehensive until I finally surrendered to the Holy Spirit and gave my life to Christ.

"When my friend invited me to her prayer group (about ten women), I found that only through God's Word can I truly know Him. I've been going to my prayer group for 14 years now. We have a terrific Bible teacher. I just love her. She explains everything so well; our questions are answered. We pray and share. My priorities have changed. My prayer group has meant everything to me. I am now preparing to teach and am so honored and thrilled to be able to share the Word."

— by Patrick Voelker
*Good Shepherd Lutheran
Cokato, Minnesota*

period of time, or change depending on who's involved.

The group we have been in is quite unique. For over ten years the same core group has met with others coming and going. Most small groups do not persist for this length of time. The same group together for too long can become stale and lose its excitement, interest and focus. This particular group has proven it is possible to work outside of the expected.

The thirst for studying God's Word together is so strong that there is not much that can keep us away from our studies on the two Monday nights a month we meet from September to June. The members vary in age from the 30s to 80-plus. Each person brings unique insights into the study of the Scriptures and we have bonded like a family. It's been a support group through the loss of spouses, family or personal illness, and other trials. The key is not to establish a

predetermined requirement for a small group. Just remember that we are called together to join in prayer, Bible study, or both.

Another effective small group I have experienced in recent years is a men's small group, as promoted by the Promise Keepers organization. Men are probably the toughest category of people to get into a small group, especially with just a few other men. But it is worth it to seek one to participate in or even organize one!

Cindy has participated in a small group of mothers who gather in the morning to pray for their children in school, teachers, and the schools in general. This too provides tremendous benefits, unity, and a bond with Christian teachers who need our prayers.

Small groups strengthen the body of Christ! They draw us closer to His Word and deepen our prayer lives. If your congregation does not have a small group program, or it has a struggling program, help it. Get involved. I guarantee you will not be the same.



testimonies of what God has done through small groups

"I am a baby Christian. My background was so varied. I had been taught religion, but never the Bible. When I was invited to a service with a dramatic presentation of God's plan of salvation, I broke down and knew I needed the Lord in my life. My good friend invited me to a meeting of *Journey Through the Word*, and my life has been truly turned around. We study the Word. We share. We ask questions and no one laughs. We truly love each other in our Christian walk. I wish we had *Journey* every day. I come away feeling so revived, refreshed, and rejuvenated. I am learning so much. My children are attending a Christian school and are going to Sunday school and vacation Bible school. They will have the solid background I never had. Thank the Lord!"

"I've been a Christian all my life. The circumstances of my life have been especially difficult. There have been so many deaths of those close to me, so many tiring, ongoing problems. I need the support and love of my Christian sisters. As we study His Word together, we receive comfort, strength and peace. I know there are people there who care and who pray for me."

— by Wilma Wissner
*Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania*

These are testimonies from participants in small groups at Ruthfred Lutheran Church where women, men, couples and youth gather around God's Word, pray and serve. Fifty years ago we gathered as a small group to form a Christian congregation in Bethel Park. Today nearly 800 people join each Sunday to worship the Lord and hear His Word preached in truth and with power. The transition from a very small congregation to a much larger one can cause a feeling of separation and dislocation. Over the years, however, small groups have kept us feeling close to each other, sharing our lives, our faith and our Lord.

An offer to help a recent widow brought the following response from her: "All you need to do at our church is express the need, and there's someone there to answer it." Whatever the size of the congregation and gathering of God's people, there are unlimited opportunities to join together as two or three in His Name to care, share, teach and to build one another up in the Lord. It's a wonderful blessing and a wonderful heritage!



"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Selecting the

This passage calls us to great diligence in choosing Bible study materials. It might be tempting to select materials which seem fascinating or perhaps are popular. Rather we should carefully examine and pray about what we choose. Following are elements to consider when evaluating materials.

Determine the purpose.

Achieving a goal is difficult if you have not defined it. Study materials should be

chosen with your purpose in mind. Different materials would be selected depending on which of the following would be considered the desired goal:

- Evangelism outreach.
- Development of "koinonia."
- Instruction in the basics.
- Discipleship.
- Support group studies.
- Ministry preparation.
- Topical studies.
- Verse by verse studies.
- Surveys of Bible books.
- Doctrinal studies.

Small group study materials for teens or adults

available from the AFLC Parish Education Department

Salvation Made Plain

Presents the way of salvation simply and concisely from God's Word. Fourteen lessons include justification, baptism, Lord's Supper, assurance, God's power to keep, prayer, and service.

Life at Its Best

A portrait of the believer and the unbeliever. The Christian in relationship to: the Bible, one's church, home and family, God's guidance, temptation, trials, recreation and stewardship.

Prayer

Eight lessons including the importance of prayer, manner of prayer, kinds of prayer, and the need for intercessory prayer.

Witnessing with the Word

A Word-centered study in evangelism. The aim of this course is to teach the student how to use the Word in witnessing to people with varied backgrounds and problems.

Contact the Parish Education Office
at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441 or
call (612) 545-5631.

Find doctrinally sound, biblically balanced material.

A. Reverence for God's Word. Does the material clearly teach that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, carries the full authority of God, as His revelation to us? Does it treat the Bible as the final truth on all matters of which it speaks, and without error in the originals? If not, there will be things left out and seeds of doubt and compromise planted.

B. The means of grace. Is the Bible seen as the usual way God communicates and works in and with us? Is the Word shown as the "powerful and effective," "sword of the Spirit," able to work change in our hearts, and to give us saving faith and spiritual growth? Or does the material emphasize seeking God outside of Scripture — through philosophy, psychology, dreams, experiences, impressions, feelings, etc.?

C. Law and gospel. Is there a clear scriptural distinction between law and gospel? Avoid studies that emphasize do's and don'ts. Choose materials where the law is used to clearly show us the utter sinfulness of our souls, the powerlessness of our wills, and our desperate need for the Savior. The gospel should be presented as a pure gift, purchased solely by the blood of Christ and given freely to any and all who receive it — plus nothing. The soul that comprehends and internalizes these two great teachings will cling to Jesus so tightly and love Him so fully, that he counts it his greatest joy to live in humble obedience to Him. Living the

right materials



— by *Pastor Don Voorhees*
St. Peder's Lutheran
Dannebrog, Nebraska

Christian life will flow out of that blessed assurance as a natural expression of thankfulness and love.

D. The sacraments. Do the materials give a scriptural balanced view of baptism and communion, as physical acts empowered by the Spirit through the Word to impart to us true spiritual blessings, and not mere ceremonies on the one hand, nor magical means of salvation on the other?

E. Conversion. Does the material clearly teach that being a Christian is not just a matter of believing and doing certain things, but that it also means being changed from the inside out, by coming to have a personal relationship with Jesus?

F. Spirit-empowered living. Does it teach that we live the Christian life by the power of the Spirit living within us, rather than by self-improvement and human effort? Does it stress that God wants to be an active partner in every aspect of our lives? Does it encourage us to seek God's will, to pray, and walk in the Spirit's strength?

G. Divisiveness. This can be almost anything, including true biblical teachings or practices, which are overemphasized, and stressed to the point of superseding the gospel. Often this material strongly condemns those who do not emphasize this particular "pet" teaching or discipline.

Is it teachable?

A. Teacher preparation. The teacher's guide should give enough background information, suggested resource materials, and devotional insight for the teacher to be both mentally and spiritually prepared.

B. Teaching tools. Does the material give the teacher and small group leader a selection of meaningful tools and not simply busy work? These include illustrations, stories, biographical examples, Bible cross-references, activities, object lessons, artwork, historical and cultural background, and ideas for personal and group application.

C. Causes people to think for themselves. Let's not spoon feed or indoctrinate people, but challenge and help them dig into the Word, and struggle through its teachings and application to their personal lives.

Help them to know not just what they believe, but why they believe it. This may mean including honest examination of differing viewpoints, in the search for the truth of God's Word.

D. Practical application. James makes it clear that faith which does not lead to good works is not real faith. So also knowledge that does not lead to a changed life is dead information. The purpose of studying the Word of God is a changed life.



The difference

small groups have made

in one family

— Eldwyn VanBruggen
Grace Free Lutheran
Valley City, North Dakota

S Small group or home Bible studies have always meant a lot to me. I feel much more at ease and more like sharing what is on my heart and mind in a small group.

My wife Bonnie and I were at a very low time in our life. Our financial situation was not good at all. I had a bill to pay and no way to pay it. I came home and it was the night for our small group home Bible study. I told Bonnie, "I don't feel like going. Why don't you go and I'll stay home." She said to me, "I won't go without you." I did not feel right about her not going so I agreed to go along.

We were at this home and for some reason the men and the women were not together. We usually are. One of the men, a very good friend of mine said to me, "Eldwyn, something is really bothering you, you're not yourself." I said, "Oh I'm okay." He said, "We're a small group. Please share it so we can pray about it." I shared our need and concern. We prayed about it.

Some people who do not know how the Lord answers prayers may call it luck but the very next day I got a check for an overpayment to Workmen's Compensation for very close to the amount that was needed. This was a real turning point for us and we have since seen God work in many wonderful ways in our lives and through home or small group Bible studies.

We at one time started a small group study as a Sunday school class meeting outside of the church in a bakery. It was a very basic study geared to reaching new people, starting out with some sharing opportunities that were not intimidating. I recall one of the first questions as being, as a child what was your favorite room in your house? People began to share and from that point began to grow.

One of the members of that class became good friends with Bonnie. We became friends

also with her husband, hoping to be able to share Christ with Him. Finally one Sunday night we started talking about spiritual things. On the next Tuesday night the Lord saw fit to take him home. He was a young man in His 30s.

We have had small group studies most every year for a period in the winter in our congregation. I feel it is a wonderful growth opportunity for the people in the congregation and for lay leaders as they get an opportunity to share and lead.

A small group study has been the means for something very special for us. Our oldest grandson, who did not know the Lord, was invited by a couple of friends to attend a Bible study group. He went and after a few weeks was asked to share. The leader was sensitive to what he was sharing and asked if he would care to go and have lunch. At that lunch He was able to share Jesus with our grandson.

Small group studies have also been a blessing to us in another way. Our family is scattered to various parts of the United States. But each one of our daughter-in-laws have been involved in small group studies and I would like to share what each one says.

Nancy

Why women with small children need small group Bible studies:

To share in Christian parenting ideas.

To learn from one another since we vary in our levels of faith.

To establish a support group and long-lasting friendships.

To set aside time each week to grow in God's Word.

To reach out and help serve God by serving others.

To have an outlet to share ideas and discuss problems and solutions.

To find ways to promote salvation with our kids.

Why couples need a Bible Study group:

To develop an openness as a couple.

To develop intimate friendships with other couples.

To share common problems.

To find and take time out of busy schedules to grow in God's Word.

To set an example for children to follow

To develop trusting relationships with other couples so as to confide in them and they in you.

Why men need a Bible study small group:

Men need other men, yet most lack vital Christian relationships with other men.

Small groups promote sharing, confidence, accountability and friendships of real value.

It gives guys a chance to really open up and talk about real life serious issues and problem areas that men are often quick to normally sidestep. Enough about sports and the weather, men really need to discuss their feelings about the other issues that matter most.

Lisa

The first small group study I was a part of was with my husband Myron. It was a bunch of young couples in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. We both learned so much about each other, the other couples and the Lord. We learned a lot about what the Bible had to say on many subjects.

In Minot, North Dakota we have both been a part of different studies. I love the ones done as couples because it really helps you get to know the other couples in your church. We can learn to be there for each other and support each other in many situations.

I've also been a part of just women studies. I really enjoy them. We study God's Word and how He wants us to live and treat others. We can all learn so much from each other here on earth. Through Jesus we can all be children of God and a part of God's family if we want to be. What a great family to be a part of! If you've never been a part of a group study I really encourage you to get involved. Once you do you will never want to stop! All our answers are right in the Bible and that gives me great peace.

Karen

In my life I have been fortunate to have participated in two neighborhood Bible studies. One was in Bismarck, North Dakota, and the other in Renton, Washington. Both of them were made up of women who were of similar ages to mine, and both groups were nondenominational. Both groups were lead by women who felt a calling to share their interest and knowledge of the Bible with others. We often purchased Bible study guides at the local religious bookstore and used them to give our study some structure.

I am the type of person who does not

often have the self-discipline to do physical fitness exercises when I am at home by myself. This is also true of my Bible study experience. I have always thought of my group Bible study sessions as my "spiritual aerobics classes." Exercising my spiritual self is much more enjoyable when I can do it with friends.

I think the key to having a rewarding Bible study experience is the ability of the group to be open and accepting to new thoughts and ideas. Many times in my Bible studies we would find that we did not always have perfect agreement on a particular concept we were discussing. This led to many stimulating discussions, and a respect of other people's interpretations. The atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance deepened our friendships. I believe the beauty of group Bible studies is how they teach us to grow stronger in keeping the great command that Jesus gave us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

God can and does use small group Bible studies for the furthering of His Kingdom. To God Be the Glory.



(Eldwyn and his wife Bonnie are part of the new AFLC home mission work in the Phoenix, Arizona area. An opportunity to travel to Arizona to assist in that work will take place in November. Contact AFLC Home Missions for more information.)

"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

Hebrews 10:24-25



Those little words

What a difference three little words can make!

We've heard it in regard to marriage and family, as well as other relationships. "I love you ... I was wrong ... I am sorry ... please forgive me." When spoken from the heart, these words will spell the difference between success and failure in home or congregation.

Three little words were included in several resolutions and discussions during the 1998 Annual Conference. It is important to remember these words when considering our goals for 1999, which cannot be realized apart from them. The words are: **over and above** or **above and beyond**. The meaning is the same and context is the same. The repetition is simply to emphasize the point.

What should be over and above? Our gifts to the 1999 AFLC budget goals.

Conference approved a sizable goal for the support of the new evangelism director. This is not included in the general fund budget. Contributions to this important venture must be over and above our regular giving.

Conference encouraged world missions to continue designated support for our missionaries and to pursue a new outreach in Portugal, over and above the approved budget.

Approval was given to the board of trustees of the schools to proceed with plans for the most ambitious campus development in the history of our schools, to be financed over and above regular contributions. So the list grows.

In coming months each of these worthy endeavors will be presented to our congregations, and decisions will be made to support them as the Lord provides. My concern is that gifts would not be channeled from one ministry to another. May we instead always remember that these projects are intended to be supported over and above our regular commitments to the AFLC family of ministries.

Gifts to the general fund, world missions, the seminary and Bible school — and let us not forget home missions, parish education and youth ministries — must continue if the work that God has committed to us is to go forward.

The goals before our fellowship are challenging ones that will stretch our commitment to the fullest, but God is able. Let's begin by exceeding our 1998 budget and then continuing to give above and beyond, over and above, as our great God supplies.

Watch what a difference these three little words will make within the AFLC!

—Pastor Robert Lee

Only Lutheran work in Portugal begins

The AFLC World Missions Committee welcomes sisters and brothers in Lisbon, Portugal, to be our partners in the Lord's work. This new work, the only Lutheran work in all of Portugal has voted to align itself with the AFLC under the official name, the *Lutheran Church of Portugal*.

The 1998 Annual Conference resolved that AFLC World Missions continue to pursue new outreach to Portugal, but no current funds in the world missions budget had been earmarked for this purpose. At its meeting in late July, the world missions committee voted to move ahead and ask the people of the AFLC for special gifts of support to begin and sustain this new outreach during its start-up period.

A subsidy to enable the start of a congregation in the city of Lisbon will be \$800 per month. It is planned that this amount will be gradually reduced over a three-year period, with the hope that the congregation will become self-sustaining by that time.

Will you please help these new friends by your prayer support? We are also in need of individuals and congregations who will send in specific monetary support on a regular basis for these next three years for the Portugal ministry. Be a part of establishing this new work for the Lord in the heart of Portugal. May God our Father bless you for your help and support!

— Pastor Eugene Enderlein
AFLC World Missions Director

Note address changes —

The Lutheran Ambassador assistant to the editor has a new address:

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Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel have a new phone number and e-mail address: 011-55-41-848-1239; abel@calnet.com.br

Missionaries Jonathan and

Tamba Abel, Campo Grande, Brazil, are traveling in the States for three months this fall for a short furlough and deputation. Their schedule is nearly filled. They can be reached at the Pastor John Abel residence at P.O. Box 97, Hitterdal, MN 56552.

Missionary Sonja Dahl,

Campo Mourão, Brazil, is scheduled to return to the States in November in order to apply again for another visa. Brazilian laws have changed, making it harder to obtain the papers to work in that nation. Please

pray with her that this process will open and allow her to return to work at the Miriam Infant Home.

Extra Sunday school material needed: World Wide Ministries, a mission headquartered in Bemidji, Minnesota, has an outreach in the far north of Canada to the Indian population. They have a need for any extra Sunday school material you or your congregation may have. Please send it to Pastor Lyle Twite, P.O. Box 119, Bagley, MN 56621.

Walking on the straight path

At some time or another while traveling, most of us have gotten lost. Perhaps it was a wrong turn, or we tried a short cut only to find the bridge was out, or maybe the directions weren't accurate.

We can compare traveling on a highway to traveling on the road of life. Our main purpose is to get to our destination. We end up unhappy at the end of our trip if we have taken wrong turns, short cuts that led nowhere and followed inaccurate or incomplete directions.

While on the path of life we make decisions constantly. We need daily guidance to make the right choices. So what is that right path referred to in the Bible?

Those on the right path are those who have accepted Christ as their Savior and have a personal, living relationship with Jesus. In this month's lesson nine from "Joy for the Journey," Women's Missionary Federation Bible study, we find guidance and direction for staying on that straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life with Jesus Christ. Emphasis is placed on studying and memorizing God's Word, meditating on it and obeying it.

Matthew 7:13-14 states: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." The word *few* should grab our attention. It's reality. There is no mass multitude traveling the narrow path. How do we stay on the right path to keep from losing our way?

The Lord never promised an easy road but He promised to go with us each step of the way when we truly and earnestly seek His will. Our human nature is prone to want our lives free of trials and testing. We often question Almighty God as to why things happen as we see death, disaster, and disease leave pain and destruction in their wake.

The longer we walk with the Lord the more we come to understand that it is through trials and testing that Christian character enters into our lives. We begin to see the truth of Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." When we learn to trust God in our trials, we are able to look back when it's over and see God's perfect plan.

Our study encourages us to make straight and level paths for our feet. Unconfessed sin in our lives causes our path to be bumpy. If we are going to be faithful in our spiritual walk with God we have to obey His Word, listen to God's counsel and choose the path that leads to eternal life.

Our attitudes and actions impact others as they observe our responses to the challenges we

encounter on our spiritual walk. We need to pray, "Lord, keep me teachable. What is there you want me to learn from this situation?"

Many times our hearts are crushed and broken, and especially so when our loved ones turn away from Jesus Christ. Think of how the heart of Jesus was broken when He was rejected while on earth, and He, the very Son of God. Oh, how often we break our Savior's heart through our disobedience and ignoring His guiding hand.

God's Word points us to the narrow path. Let us seek that path by following the perfect road map, the Bible. Here you will never be led astray. Clear directions are given to keep us safely in His will. Let us stand firm and be found faithful to the end.



— by Aini Myking
Medicine Lake Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

Order the 1999 WMF Bible Study now

Next year's WMF Bible Study is entitled, "Our Hope is in Christ," written by Barbara Moland of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Washington. This study on I Peter was written to encourage readers in their understanding of God's Word and in living in the message of salvation, hope, mercy and the call to be a servant of God.

The cost (including postage) is \$3 each for orders of five or more copies and \$5 each for orders less than five. Please include the payment with your order and send it to: Karen Knudsvig, Rt. 2 Box 11, Buxton, ND 58218.

Fall WMF Rallies

Minneapolis District — Hosanna Lutheran in Cumberland, Wisconsin, October 17.

West Coast District — Our Redeemer Lutheran in Kirkland, Washington, September 12.

North Central Minnesota District — Maple Bay Lutheran near Mentor, Minnesota, September 26.

South Dakota District — Tabor Lutheran near Webster, South Dakota, October 10.

Eastern North Dakota District — Living Faith Lutheran in Larimore, North Dakota, September 26.

Attention snowbirds

Pastor Robert D. Giles, Sun City West, Arizona is sharing the ministry at Sonland Lutheran Church, a small and new independent Lutheran congregation in Casa Grande, Arizona. Snowbirds are welcome to join in the 8:30 a.m.

Sunday adult Bible class and the 10:00 a.m. worship services. Casa Grande is a small city in the midst of a vast farming area between Phoenix and Tucson on the I-10 freeway. For more information call Pastor Giles at 602-214-2045 or Gordon Ralieg at 520-421-2275.

around the world.

summer in Erfurt, Germany.

Europe begin classes in the fall.

lived as a monk from 1505 to 1511.

cept of mission as we do.”

spirit we have here," he said.

included:

Haus at the University of Tübingen

to see the lost saved.

in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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gospel.

AFLC memorial gifts

July 1998

Name	Given by	Department
Mary Erickson	Vernon/Dorothy Russum	AFLBS
Benjamin Urmann and Selma Haroldson	Gregory/Donna Bruce	
Elois Clinton	Randall/Karen Pederson	
	Friends and family	
Rachel Nelson	Esther Danielson	
Hazel Langness	Mildred Strand	
Viggo Miller	Ruth Quail	Missions
	Esther Danielson	AFLBS
Mildred Holte and Rufus Kamphaugh	Rev./Mrs. Harvey Jackson	
LeRoy Raad	Randall/Karen Pederson	
Harvey Dyrud	David/Arleen Dyrud	Evangelist
	Richard/Barbara Erickson	
	Lance/Jeanie Gast	
	Sam/Mary Jo Dyrud	
	Myrtle Dyrud	
	Peter/Judy Dyrud	
	Irvn/Janice Schmitke	
	Valborg Huglen	
	Rev./Mrs. Amos Dyrud	
	Rev. Raynard Huglen	
	Donald/Sonja Galmer	
	Rev./Mrs. James Rasmussen	
	Westaker Ladies Mission	World Missions
	Sheldon/Mary Mortrud	
	Leola Furman	
	Richard/Carolyn Rasmussen	
	Rev./Mrs. John Abel	
	Judith Wold	AFLTS
	Loiell/Mary Lynn Dyrud	
	Rev./Mrs. Jerry Holmaas	
Phyllis Olson	Ella Rekedal	
Maine Walvatne	Kathy Akerman	
Eleanor Gaard and Edith Nielsen	Mavis Tenneboe	
Myrtle Keller	Robert/Helen Miller	
Martin Frie	Gordon/Doris Newell	
Eugene Dalen	Esther Larson	World Missions

Bible school conference

Pastor Richman led a workshop on a revival of biblical authority in Lutheranism and Pastor Johnson on "The Music Our Bible School Students Listen To." Contrary to what was reported in the August issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, no paper written by AFLTS Dean Francis Monseth was presented.

Of special interest to AFLC attenders were the new Bible schools opening in Eastern Europe:

*** In Dziegelow, Poland** (pronounced Jing-GAEL-oave), a new

Bible school opens with at least 15 students under the direction of 29-year-old Pastor Grzegorz (pronounced SHAY-gorshe) Giemza. Meeting in the tiny rural village famous among Polish and Czech evangelicals for its annual week-long tent crusade, which draws up to 3,000 young people every July, the Dziegelow school hopes to train new converts who meet the Lord at the same site. AFLC and EEMN missionary Tim Hinrichs will teach Old Testament at the school.

*** In Martin, Slovakia** (population 60,000), young evangelical Bohdan Hroban opens doors in a fine facility next to a large church complex served by his father. Bohdan, who attended the AFLC Bible school in Minneapolis in 1995, said he expects more than 40 students. The Slovakia Lutheran Bible Institute will hold classes on Saturdays during its inaugural year. The young director has close ties to EEMN, which encouraged him to attend AFLBS.

*** In Budapest, Hungary**, a new Bible school started this month led by Pastor Bulcsu Szell (pronounced BOOL-chew SAIL) and young director Janos Herkely (pronounced YAN-oash HER-kel). The school's purpose is to teach the Word of God and equip young believers to win the lost and help converts grow. Herkely, a pastor in his 20s, is the school's director.

All three schools have AFLC connections and loyal supporters. EEMN has also encouraged the birth of these schools.

For Pastor Johnson, in his third year as AFLBS dean, the conference was a time to connect with several like-minded evangelicals. "I had great fellowship with so many there," he said, citing a special kinship with directors from schools such as the Finnish Lutheran Mission Bible School leaders in Ryttyla, Finland, which has 85 students. "They said their school is based on three platforms: the Bible, revival, and mission," shared Pastor Johnson. "Those are the kind of Lutherans I love to work with." Pastor Johnson said he found similar friends of revival and Christ-motivated mission in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, and other countries. "These born-again brothers give me hope for tomorrow," he said.

The average size of the Bible schools represented was between 15 and 60. Four years ago the conference was held at the AFLBS campus in Minneapolis. The Johannalund School in Upsala, Sweden, will host the next gathering in 2002.

Luther Monson	King/Elva Auestad Robert/Joan Knudson Rev./Mrs. Everald Strom Stella Olson Charles/Virginia Peterson Kenneth/Mary Nash Thea Freestad Rev./Mrs. James Rasmussen Garnet Holm Rev./Mrs. John Abel Mildred Strand Rev./Mrs. Orville Olson Harvey/Grace Loftsgaard Eldwyn/Bonnie Van Bruggen	Home Missions
Jesse Anderson Pauline Lennick Phyllis Olson	Kenneth/Mary Nash Kenneth/Ruby Broten Green Lake Lutheran, Spicer, Minnesota	General Fund
Charlotte Funseth Jennie Peterson	Mildred Strand Gordon/Theoline Gunderson Hilman Knudsvig Edith Gudim Gerry/Karen Knudsvig Ny Stavanger Ladies Aid Joel/Susan Baker Harvey/Helen Smette Verna Wollin	AFLBS
Richard Snipstead	Rev./Mrs. Gerald Mundfrom Rev./Mrs. Tim Skramstad John/Cynthia Schlenk Friends and family Irvin/Ruth Hodnefield Keith Quanbeck Rev./Mrs. Robert Lee Mitchell/Marilee Johnson Rev./Mrs. Lyle Aadahl James/Gwen Berge Rev./Mrs. Del Palmer Beatrice Anderson Rev./Mrs. James L. Johnson Rev./Mrs. Gary Skramstad Donald/Mary Lou Rodvold Iris Myron	AFLTS AFLBS Vision 2004 Parish Education General Fund Home Missions
Legacies Harvey Dyrud to World Missions		



AFLC Schools begin classes September 10

Seventy seniors returned to the AFLBS campus to begin their second year. They were joined by an equal number of juniors. Unique to this year's student body is the fact that there are an equal number of men and women students. Dean James L. Johnson said, "I'm impressed with the large number of young men and women who have a sense of their full-time call to Christian service."

A disappointment was that several students from Africa were registered but unable to leave their country due to the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

Project 2004 director Tonnes Pollestad submitted the school's proposed building plan to the city of Plymouth on September 4. He is hoping to bring that to the city council meeting on November 4, for approval.

The Free Lutheran Seminary opened September 8 with ten full-time students and two part-time. This includes the three new seminarians: Randy Rokala, Dana Coyle, and Wayne Olson.

AFLC Songbook

All versions of the "Make Music to Our God" songbook, sponsored by the Free Lutheran Youth, are now available. The words only edition costs \$3, while the music edition is \$25. Overheads of individual songs may be ordered for \$1 each. The songbook features many of the songs used at recent FLY conventions, at AFLBS and Bible camps. A total of 120 songs are included. A shipping and handling fee will be charged on all orders. To order or receive more information contact Tim or Rose Carlson at P.O. Box 339, Wheatland, IA 52777; phone 319-374-1434.

Nathan and Julie Monseth and family have moved from the Minneapolis area to the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates where they will be teaching for the next two years at an American school.

AFLBS Fall Campus Days are scheduled for October 23-25. Pastor Mike Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota is the Saturday evening speaker. The weekend begins at 8 p.m. on Friday. All high school students in grades nine to 12 are encouraged to attend. Cost is only \$10. Call 612-544-9501 for more information.

Eddie Britz, Wheatland, Iowa has left his position as youth worker at Christian Free Lutheran in order to work with the "Greater Europe Mission" in Spain. He is working with a camp and conference center in maintenance and carpentry and during the winter will work as a graphic designer for the camp's advertising.

Beaverton, Oregon — Willamette Free Lutheran will host the Pacific Northwest District youth in an "Opportunity to Serve" outreach event on October 2-4. Training and times for application are planned as the youth help with the ministry of this new home mission congregation.

Southwest Central Minnesota District organized a two-week mission trip to Leon and Aguascalientes, Mexico. The thirty-two workers included four AFLBS students and two pastors' families: the Richard Larsons of Abercrombie, North Dakota, and the Tony Stockmans from Brandon, Minnesota. The group left on July 31, 1998, on a "Mission Possible" bus out of Montana. (Originally the group planned to use the Partners in Mission Outreach bus but that needs to be replaced with a more road-worthy bus.)

The workers carried cement, a tedious process done by hand, for St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Leon. The congregation, led by Pastor Samuel Flores has been in the process of building their church for ten years as funds and workers were available. Rita Stockman said, "It is

AFLBS Parents' Day is December 5, followed by the annual schools' Christmas concert on December 6 with afternoon and evening performances.

Pastor Joseph Schultz, Deshler, Nebraska, resigned as pastor of Abiding Word Lutheran Church in order to accept the call from Grace Lutheran in Buckley, Washington. Pastor Schultz began his new ministry in September.

Mrs. Myrtle Saukerson, Chamberlain, South Dakota, celebrated her 99th birthday on August 17 with family and friends at the Sunset Valley Nursing Home. A member of St. Olaf Lutheran Church of rural Chamberlain, she was married to the late Otto Saukerson, a well-known AFLC lay pastor. They served congregations in six states.

Upsala, Minnesota — Word of Life Free Lutheran will be celebrating their Tenth Anniversary on November 1, 1998. All friends in the AFLC along with former pastors, interim and student pastors are encouraged to join in the afternoon service of celebration at 1:30 p.m.

impossible for words to express what this help meant to Pastor Flores. The mutual blessing it was to all of us is something we cannot measure." The church, when completed, will have a capacity of 200 people. They also built a cistern and unloaded handmade bricks.

The group traveled to Celaya to see the land Pastor Milton Flores and his congregation has in hopes of building someday and then to Aguascalientes to visit Missionaries Todd Schierkolk and Dan Giles and their families. They too have land outside of the city with hopes to build another church. The urgent need in Mexico is to get Spanish language Sunday school material available. Currently the material available is not Lutheran and is costly. Missionary Dan Giles has a special burden for this need.

Could it happen here?

Many people have been helped by groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. In these groups they have found a warm welcome and an abundance of love and encouragement. The group has become a safe haven and a source of strength as temptation and addiction is confronted.

When I hear people talk about their A. A. group and all it has meant to them, I'm glad for them and the help they have found. At the same time, however, I have some hopeful wondering. Wouldn't it be nice if more people talked that way about their congregation or a small group within their congregation? Could we not have, should we not have, groups within our congregations, focused on Christ, providing some of the positive, life-changing things folks find in these other groups?

The groups stress honesty about who you are and the nature of your problem. A typical beginning of a presentation is, "I'm Bill and I'm an alcoholic." That same kind of honesty is necessary for following Jesus and growing in Him. The Bible says, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10, NIV).

I have never started a sermon by saying, "I'm Craig and I'm a hell-deserving sinner. I need help." Maybe I should. Whether we say the words or not, we should always be aware in our mind and heart that it is true. We should not try to deny it, but confess it before God and others.

The groups provide a place where many people feel they can confess their addiction and struggles and still be accepted. Do they feel that is the case in our congregations and our small groups? Or do we have people in our midst who think, "If the rest of the church really knew me, they'd kick me out?"

During the time in the worship service when prayer requests were shared, one mom told of how her husband had left the family, finances were tight, she was worried and didn't know what to do and needed prayer. Someone in the congregation spoke up and told of a job opening in his business. A lady told of going through a similar time in her life and offered support. Other words of encouragement were shared. The pastor said later he was in a bit of shock at what was happening and wasn't sure what to do. This wasn't the usual course of events during prayer request time. Generally it was only an "organ recital" — a time for asking prayer about this aunt's organ that

was failing and telling about this uncle's organ that was going to be removed. The pastor muttered a prayer and shuffled through the rest of the service. After some time with the Lord, he was able to see more clearly what had happened. He came to the service the next week and thanked the lady who made the original prayer request. He believed, with her honesty, she was helping the church grow into what it was meant to be.

At times, in the church we just give "organ recitals" to one another, and hesitate to share our heart. We keep the struggles inside and put on the front that everything is okay.

What is okay is to be human. We have all sinned and are continually falling short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). God knows that better than we do. It

is pointless to try to fool Him or anyone else. The good news is, even though He knows us completely, He still loves us and "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NIV). We can confess who we are and still be accepted, forgiven and loved. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NIV).

Since the holy God accepts and forgives sinners like us, can we do any less to one another? Should not His church be a place, more than any other, where wounded, crushed, struggling and repentant sinners, feel they can come and find a warm welcome?

As others have said, the church is not a museum where the saints come to display their goodness. It is a hospital where sick sinners come to find healing. The role model Jesus gives us as to how to act in church is not the Pharisee who had certainly done good things, and let others know about them, but "looked down on everybody else" (Luke 18:9, NIV). The example we are to follow is the tax collector who prayed, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13, NIV).

The tax collector despised by others, the one who had a string of broken marriages, the women caught in adultery, the ones society called unclean — in the Gospels we see them continually being drawn to Jesus. His combination of uncompromising holiness and unequalled love inspired and transformed them. May those same kind of people, who are just like us, be drawn to us and loved by us, so that they too might see Jesus.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"I'm Craig
and I'm a
hell-
deserving
sinner.
I need help"**

BUILDING THE BASE

Swimming in danger

This summer, we became painfully aware of some of the physical dangers in our world. A teenage girl disappeared from “safe” little Hal-

lock, Minnesota and terrorists bombed “safe” embassies in two African nations. We may not be aware, however, of the greater spiritual dangers that always surround us! In continuing our picture of this world as God’s “aquarium,” and we humans as the “fish” in it, we observe the following dangers:

• **The fishing lures of the flesh.**

Like fish, we people have natural hungers. Some of these hungers are spiritual in origin and can only be satisfied by Jesus, in whom we have “every spiritual blessing” (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, we find ourselves in danger whenever we are tempted to satisfy these spiritual hungers with the lures or desires of our own flesh.

The “real minnows” of career, success, wealth, possessions, or even family, may attract us. But if we pursue them (and swallow them) as our chief goals, we will find they have hidden hooks lead can lead to our spiritual capture and destruction. There are also “artificial minnows” that look and wiggle like the real ones, but which provide no nourishment. Sex outside of God’s will might promise intimacy, love, or fulfillment, but it only delivers emptiness and the hook of sexually transmitted diseases. Alcohol or drugs

promise escape from problems but only deliver the hook of addiction and bondage. Bright and flashy “artificial lures,” like silver spoons or red and white daredevils, don’t look like fish, but they seem very desirable. Silver spoons like casinos or huge lottery jackpots can lure us into gambling but then snare us with the hook of addiction and financial ruin.

We must be careful to eat our fill of Jesus and His Word or we will become hungry for the worthless lure of the flesh.

• **The spawning instincts of the world**

The spawning instincts of fish can also get them into trouble. Salmon, for example, will swim together upstream, against all obstacles, in order to reproduce. They become easy prey for waiting fishermen. I know of a Minnesota farmer who has used a pitchfork to catch northerns as they came from a lake into a slough to spawn. This is like the “broad way” that leads to destruction that Jesus talks about in Matthew 7:13. If we follow the evil instincts and example of the world, against God’s Word, we will find Satan and his “pitchfork” waiting for us at the end.

• **The predators**

The greatest danger to a fish is its predators: those bigger fish who seek to eat it. Our greatest danger is the spiritual predator mentioned in I Peter 5:8. We are warned that the devil is “seeking someone to devour.” We need to be on the watch for his

ambushes. He and the fallen angels are bigger and more powerful than we are, and they intend to destroy us.

• **The pollution of sin**

Another danger to fish is pollution. This may come from the dumping of human garbage or industrial wastes into the earth’s waters.

This world is an aquarium totally polluted by sin, and we have all taken a fatal dose of this poison into our systems. The result will be eternal death for each of us (Romans 6:23), unless we take the only antidote: the blood of Jesus Christ!

Have you dealt with the pollution of sin in your life by claiming for yourself, the benefits of Jesus’ death on the cross?

• **The shallows**

Shallow water is also a danger to fish because it is too warm and doesn’t contain enough oxygen for fish to breathe. We humans, also, cannot live in the “shallows” of today’s thinking, where there is not enough “oxygen” of the absolute truths in God’s Word. Spiritual life cannot survive in these spiritual shallows. Rather, we need the depths of God’s Word to remain spiritually healthy.

Are you swimming in the depths of God’s Word?

Every day we swim through spiritual dangers. We need Jesus to bring us safely through!

— by **Pastor Craig Wentzel**
Zoar and Living Word Lutheran
Edmore, North Dakota