

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

September 23, 1997

*Celebrating*



Lebanon Lutheran, Leeds, ND – 100th Anniversary.



North Prairie Lutheran, Leeds, ND – 100th Anniversary.



Buffalo Lake Lutheran, Eden, SD – 100th Anniversary.

*God  
at  
work*

**Report  
on the  
1997 FLY  
Convention**

**p. 4-11**

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 23, 1997  
Volume 35, Number 12



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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...

*for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith; as it is written, "The righteous man shall live by his faith."*  
— Romans 1:16-17

**R**emember when it was quite a deal to be the first one in your neighborhood to get a TV? Nowadays you are behind the times if you don't have e-mail. What about spiritual firsts? Is there something to be said for being the first ones to hear and believe the gospel?

Paul says that the Jews received the gospel first, then the Greeks. The Jews were very proud of the fact that they were God's chosen people, but not rightly so.

God told them, as recorded in Deuteronomy, "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples" (7:7). And later God said, "Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people" (9:6). God chose the Jews because He wanted to take the very least and the very lowest and demonstrate His grace.

The Jews were the smallest and most backwards people of all. Yet He treated them in a special way. If they did right, He blessed them far more than any others. If they did evil, He was patient as long as He could be. He sent the prophets to teach them how to live in a relationship with Him. He disciplined them severely for their sins. God chose them to be an example of His salvation. In these people we see grace at work in the sinful, unworthy and unlovely.

God often starts at the bottom and works His way up. People

are often less willing to listen to the gospel when they are comfortable. But the down-and-out and the lowly hear the Word and are saved. God often acts in a manner opposite the way things are in the world.

This is the good news of the gospel. God does not regard any one's position when it comes to salvation. He opens the door wide for all to come. No doubt we have times when we are so much like the Jews. We have received many advantages. The Word of God has often been preached to us, yet we find little goodness or godliness in ourselves. While we hate to admit our failures in word and deed, our hearts are the worst. We are small in spiritual power and stubborn in heart. We have nothing we can do but call out to God and seek His grace.

Remember that the Jews received grace in their smallness and stubbornness so that the true character of grace might be known. Let us never think that the greatness or goodness of our lives comes from us. It is now and will be as it always has been — **a gift from God.**



— Pastor  
Steve Mundfrom  
Bethany Lutheran  
Sebek, Minnesota

## sound bites

**1** “If more Americans could be persuaded to carve out of their three or four hours of television viewing each day a period of five minutes at bedtime and use this time to ask their child a simple question — “How did things go today?” — and listen, the results in terms of individual families and society as a whole could, I believe, be highly salutary.”

— George Gallup, Jr.

**4** “Young people today are under more psychological stress than ever before ... They are freer than ever before to engage in sexual activity, to abuse drugs, and to flout adult authority. At the same time, they are less prepared than ever before to manage these new freedoms.”

— David Elkind

**6**

“If our kids are going to develop at their God-given pace, we must abandon the notion that they can be groomed and displayed as symbols of our proficiency as parents.”

— Doug Fields

**2** “The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think than what to think — rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.”

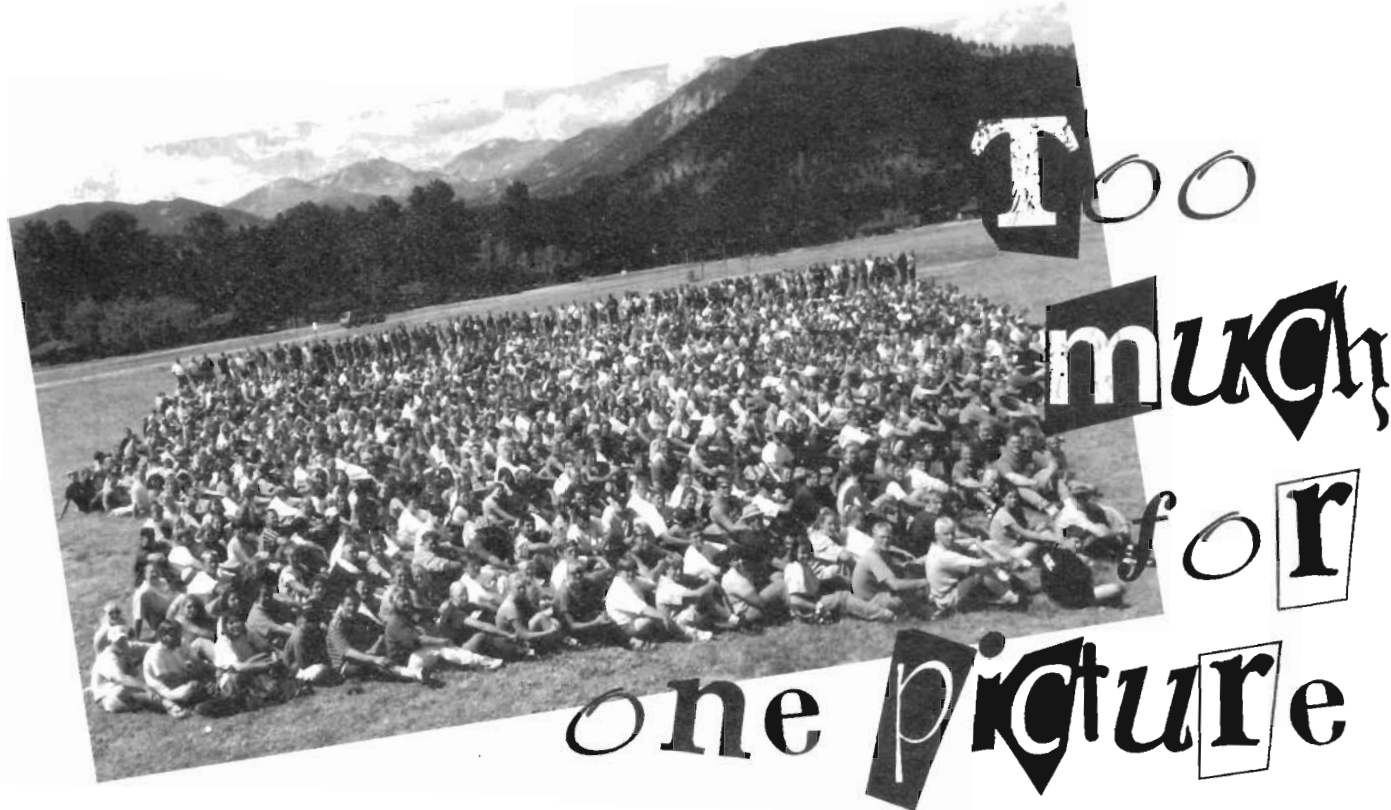
—James Beattie

**3** “People who do not like children are swine, dunces, and blockheads, not worthy to be called men and women, because they despise the blessing of God, the Creator and Author of marriage.”

— Martin Luther

“The life that has grown up and developed without laughter, and without the sunny brightness which youth justly claims as its right, lacks buoyancy and elasticity, and becomes heavy and unsympathetic, if not harsh and morose.”

**5** — G. S. Reany



## Report on the 1997 FLY Convention



Gretchen Nelson,  
Tioga, ND

It's tough to fit 1,460 people in one picture. There's a guy on the right who keeps scooting to the side and out of camera-range. Some folks on the left don't want to get too close, but they have to do so in order to be seen. And then there's the guy in the rear who stands so tall and so far back that his head is liable to get cut off in the picture. It's tough to fit them all in one shot, but we gave it a try.

It's tough to describe the Free Lutheran Youth convention in one brief report.

**It's big.** The 1,460 people in attendance, 1,060 being youth, made it the largest single event in AFLC history.

**It's busy.** Breakfast starts at 7:30 a.m. Prayer and discussion groups follow. Then there's large assembly teaching times and large group workshops and on some days 42 elective workshops to choose from. Then comes choir and basketball tournaments and volleyball and miniature golf and swimming and hiking and just hanging around. Prayer times, the evening service, the afterglow and dorm devotions follow with lights out coming with the hope of a little rest before the arrival of another full day.

**It's complicated.** Figuring out who

goes in which bed is complicated with 14 people. Try doing it for 1,460. And then comes the worship services to plan and the recreation time to organize and the workshops to arrange, plus a myriad of other details that many of us are glad to be unaware of.

**It's beautiful.** As you stand in the YMCA camp in Estes Park, Colorado and look around you, the majestic Rocky Mountains can be seen on all sides. But that wasn't the most beautiful site August 4 to 9. It was beautiful to see kids go forward when the invitation was extended to come and receive help in how to know Christ as Lord and Savior. During the week 130 young people filled out cards indicating they had received Jesus as Savior or rededicated their life to Him.

**It's exciting.** The theme of one evening's message was God's love for the ones society considers "nobodies." At the close of the service, along with the invitation to come forward and receive Christ, was an invitation and challenge to come forward and take a stand, expressing a desire to be a witness for Jesus and share His love with the nobodies of this world. Young people quickly got out of their seats and filled the front of the auditorium as well as over halfway down the aisles. As



outgoing FLY President James L. Johnson said, "It was exciting to see kids wanting to be evangelists, showing compassion for ones the rest of the world ignores."

**It's challenging.** Speaker Pam Stenzel laid it on the line in declaring that God created sex for one context only: marriage. New FLY President Bob Halverson encouraged his listeners to consider: "Does your relationship with Jesus influence the world around you or is the world influencing you?" Pastor Brian Pearson asked, "Are you a friend of the world or a friend of God? ... You can't be both." Mike Kingery, a former major league baseball player, put on a batting clinic and shared his testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. He told of friends who impacted his life and encouraged his listeners to make an impact as well.

**It's full of variety.** Like their numbers are almost too many for one picture frame to contain, their variety of stories is too much for one article to contain. Some came from small towns or rural settings; others were used to big city life. Some had been going to church since before they could remember; others had little familiarity with a church. Some were from stable Christian homes, some from broken homes, others had been bounced from foster home to foster home. But they all had in common a sinful nature, a need for the Savior and they are deeply loved by Jesus.

**It's encouraging.** Kids were open and searching. As James L. Johnson said, "It seems like this generation is more open to the Lord than some previous generations." He was also encouraged to see kids ministering to each other, supporting and praying for one another.

**It's big.** Some remembered how 12 years ago having 300 kids at the FLY convention seemed like a multitude. The numbers are impressive, but much more impressive is seeing God at work, touching a generation and calling them to Him.

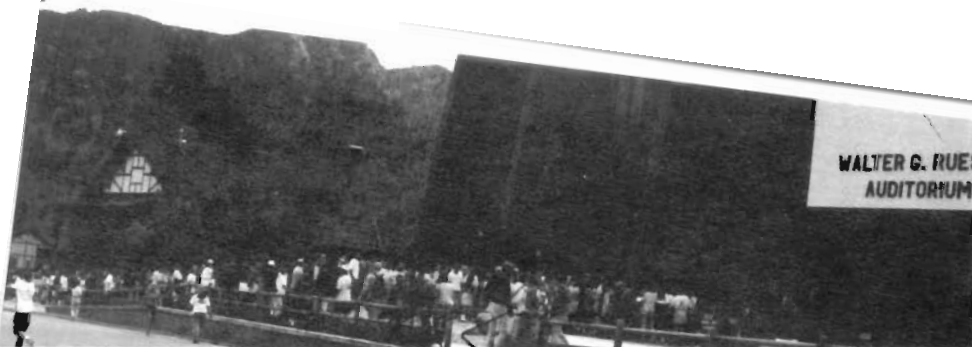


— Pastor Craig Johnson



Jessica Johnson, Glyndon, MN.





Long lines for the cafeteria moved quickly especially during the sunny days at the end of the week.

## Sufficient grace

A year ago I was fearfully considering taking on the youth midweek Bible study at church. This was incredible because I had successfully resisted any teaching position in our church for over 15 years! But II Corinthians 12:9 promises, "But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me." Praise the Lord for His all-sufficient grace.

I accepted the challenge. My twelve youth now affectionately call me "their leader." It is my prayer we walk together with Jesus by His grace.

Now one year later I have just had the privilege of being a counselor at the national Free Lutheran Youth convention in Colorado. Our church sent 11 youth as well as another mom and our pastor. In my weakness, Christ's power rests on me!

This was my first convention and what an experience! No sleep on a bus full of teens, people who shower at 5 a.m. and there's

no way to get mirror access when sharing a room with five young women.

I saw young people accept Jesus as Savior. I heard kids praise Jesus for who He is. I had the privilege of praying with and encouraging the girls I counseled. Our young people have so much to deal with and face daily, they too, need to know God's grace is sufficient.

I heard challenging messages by Spirit-filled speakers who reached out with the love of Jesus. They pointed out the need for right choices and gave the facts about the consequences when we make poor choices. They called for our youth to work in the harvest; some at school and home, others are needed elsewhere. We were all challenged to prayer with passion. We also participated in praise and worship music daily before many of the sessions. God was glorified.

As an adult and first-time parent of a teen with more to follow, I was encouraged to see this youth work firsthand. I was challenged by the need to teach our young people the truth of God's Word. Our teens need to not only be converted, but disciplined. I am thankful to my God that in spite of our humanness His Spirit works through us to reach the lost, build His Church and glorify Himself. I am called to be obedient, His grace is sufficient.



—Faylin Myhre  
Bethany Free Lutheran  
Abercrombie, North Dakota

First-time counselor  
Lynn Waldie, Reva, SD.



Ruthfred Lutheran's  
Youth Worker, Brenda  
Stilley (center) with some  
of her youth from Bethel  
Park, PA — Jenn Opder-  
man, Mark Thorhauer,  
and Amanda Kruger.

a first-time counselor's confession



Members of the St. Olaf Lutheran Youth Group in Montgomery, IL. The FLY Convention was a life-changing week for this youth group as several met Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

## A mountain peak experience

**T**wenty-four hikers start gingerly up the mountain. At first their pace is unified and fast, maneuvering with agility around trees, rocks and streams. As the terrain steepens the group becomes spread out, some forging ahead, some stopping for long breaks, some getting sidetracked and some turning back.

In the end, only a little more than half make it to the pinnacle, but the view for those who do persevere is well worth the climb.

Hiking was only a small part of the activities at the Free Lutheran Youth convention August 4 to 9 in Estes Park, Colorado. However, it serves as a metaphor for many people's Christian walk.

Just as on a hike, many start out in their Christian life energized, enthusiastic and ready for the challenge ahead. But as time goes on, the struggles and trials of the sometimes rough terrain may tend to slow the pace.

Along the hike there are many highs and lows. The highs help carry the Christian through the lows. Reaching a peak along the way, however small it may be, invigorates him or her to keep on in their walk with Jesus.

Time spent at the FLY convention was one of those mountain peak experiences, both literally and figuratively, for many of us who attended. Campers and counselors alike were encouraged and renewed in their faith.

As a first-time counselor, I had little experience as a spiritual leader. I felt secure in my own faith but lacked courage in my ability to mentor others in their Christian lives.

God gave me a boldness and seemed to put just the right words into my mouth during the devotional time with the girls in my dorm room. It was a wonderful reminder that it



The author (front) is pictured with Lyle Forde, her father and the convention choir director, along with their Presten g cousins who attended the convention.

is not me, but God working through me, whom I need to rely on for the strength to share His message with others.

As Christians continue on their spiritual hikes, they have the joy of knowing they will one day reach the pinnacle — heaven — and will never have to face another low again. Along with that joy comes the responsibility to share His love with others and help them too, reach the pinnacle. Mountain peak experiences, like the FLY convention, remind us of the need to allow God to use us to share His message.

As one person remarked as we reached the top of our earthly hike, "this is as close to heaven as some will ever get." I pray that statement won't prove true for some person because I failed to share my faith.



—Rachel Forde  
member of Elim Lutheran Church  
Lake Stevens, Washington  
sophomore at DePauw University  
Greencastle, Indiana



Newly elected Free Lutheran Youth officers: (standing), 1st vice president — Wade Mobley, Lake Preston, SD; president — Bob Halvorson, Bloomington, MN; devotional life secretary — Jeremy Erickson, Roseau, MN; (seated), treasurer — Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Northome, MN; secretary — Holly Roed, McIntosh, MN; 2nd vice president — Wes Patterson, Bloomington, MN. The 1999 Nominating Committee (not pictured): Ben Monseth, Rogers, MN; Jeremy Fugleberg, Fargo, ND; Brooke Schrage, Wheatland, IA; Luke Johnson, Minneapolis, MN; and Rachel Forde, Arlington, WA.

## The 1999 convention, June 28-July 3

During the conference, the Free Lutheran Youth Executive Board met with the AFLC Youth Board and agreed unanimously to recommend returning to Estes Park for 1999.

Because the convention has

outgrown both the Reusch Auditorium (capacity 850) and the Longhouse (about 1500), the boards recommended holding two tracks at the same time — Junior High in Reusch and Senior High in the Longhouse.



The Britz family from Houghton, Michigan, was well represented at the convention. Pictured are: (L. to R.) Ben, Andy, Josh, Eddie, and (front), JoAnna with their mother, Maria. Andy and Eddie work with the youth in Wheatland, Iowa, and came to Estes Park with over 60 people from Christian Free Lutheran Church (the largest youth group represented at the convention).

## A testimony shared at the FLY convention

*In December 1996, Jill White, Northome, Minnesota, was killed by a drunk driver. Jill, 16, was active in the youth group at Hope Lutheran in Northome.*

Hi, I'm Carole, Jill White's mom.

Two years ago Jill and I were here at the convention. It was awesome! When we got home, Jill said she wished she'd gotten up and given a testimony — so this one's for Jill.

Everyone who knew Jill knew that God was number one in her life and she wasn't afraid to tell you. But I'm not here to talk about Jill.

I want to tell you about God's power if you just trust in Him.

After the accident, we learned that Dana, the man who hit Jill, was a convicted repeat drunk driver. Eight years ago he killed someone the same way and still indicated no remorse. That was very hard to take!

But God put it in my heart to pray for Dana. "God, touch Dana. Soften his heart and help him realize what he has done." I prayed daily for him and believe



Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, Grace Lutheran in DeKalb, Illinois.



# The power of God's forgiveness

me, there were days when I didn't want to, but I knew I had to trust in God.

I knew there was nothing I could do to bring Jill back, so I just focused on Dana. He was fighting it and refusing to plead guilty. One day Jerry, my husband, and I agreed that we were going to trust God completely. He was in control and there in the beginning and whatever happens is in God's hands.

The day in court arrived when the jury selection would begin. We were apprehensive because we had been subpoenaed for the trial and everything was so foreign to us. That morning I prayed, "Lord, if you could keep us from going through this, please do." Later that morning the attorney called and reported that Dana had pled guilty. There would be no trial and the sentencing would be the next morning.

We were so relieved and we thanked God.

The next day Jerry and I went to the sentencing. At its conclusion, Dana turned to us and apologized. The assistant attorney said in all the cases she has seen, he was only the third person who

ever showed remorse and apologized. Another answer to prayer.

But God didn't stop there. After the sentencing, God put it in my heart to mail Dana one of Jill's Bibles with a letter and a picture of Jill. Three days later we received the following letter:

7/19/97

Carole,

*I received your letter today and thought that I would respond. They have kept the Bible from me because they said it is unauthorized material. I have started the process for an appeal to have it delivered to me.*

*Again, I am truly very sorry for having taken your daughter from you so soon in her life. I cannot express the way that I feel.*

*When I was first jailed in Grand Rapids (Minnesota), I tried to go through this by myself. But the grief that I felt for having done what I did was too much for me to bear. I called on a preacher to help me out. On his visits to the jail he showed me that through God and prayer that I didn't have to go through it by myself. I can never forgive myself*

*for my crimes, but through constant prayer, I am hoping that God will forgive me.*

*The first 25 years of my life I tried to do everything my way. I only wish that it didn't take such a tragedy to show me that I need God in my life. I couldn't even begin to understand what you are going through because of me. I read all the letters from you and everyone else and ask God why it wasn't me who died instead of Jill. I keep asking God to show me the way.*

*I can only hope that you can forgive me for causing you and your family such grief. I want to thank you for sending me Jill's Bible. It really means a lot to me to have your prayers for me.*

Sincerely,  
Dana

So whatever you do, please don't give up on God and prayer! It isn't God who brings sadness and trouble into our lives, it's Satan and the evil in this world. But God is there to carry us through if we just trust in Him.



Lars Dyrud, Grand Forks, North Dakota, who served as the Dean of Men, and Missionary Dan Giles, a workshop leader.



Rosie Keenan, Colette Doney, and Erin Boyovich, Bethany Lutheran in Astoria, Oregon.



Looking down toward the dormitories from the Longhouse where the main sessions were held.

## It's a big budget

The budget for the Free Lutheran Youth convention was \$302,000. For the first time since 1991, the convention failed to come away with a large surplus. Said former president James L. Johnson, "In the three previous conventions, we came away with about \$20,000 extra to fund other ministries. This year we barely broke even."

What was the difference? "We gave \$100 discounts to pastors and wives and \$50 discounts to adults attending, and we wanted to house those adults in the nicest rooms available," explained Pastor Johnson who said those rooms in the new Wind River Inn cost

FLY \$250 per adult. "That cost us an additional \$10,000."

Furthermore, with 1,500 expected to attend, the FLY Executive Board decided to enlarge its staff to 50 and to drop counselor registration from \$125 to \$100. "As it turned out, we really needed the extra adults," explained Pastor Johnson. There was one adult for every five students.

Registration fees have remained at \$250 for the last three conventions. In his outgoing report, the former president recommended raising registration to \$275 for the 1999 FLY Convention.

FLY treasurer, Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Northome, Minneso-

ta, wrote checks to the Estes Park YMCA totaling \$246,666 for the use of its facility during the week.



You did not have to be a teenager to attend the FLY convention! Pastor David Skordahl, Dalton, Minnesota, and his grandson, Alex Monseth.



Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Chairman of the AFLC Youth Board, and Diane Wolla, Minot, North Dakota, were joined by Rosalie Paulson, Fosston, Minnesota, and Pastor Brian Davidson, Ponca City, Oklahoma, to coordinate the huge task of "operating" the convention. They were joined by numerous personnel, including medical and security professionals.



Pastor James L. Johnson, AFLBS Dean; Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC Youth Director; and Joshua Skogerboe, the worship team leader during the convention. Pastor Johnson concluded his two terms as Free Lutheran Youth president.

## Did you know

- Convention registrar, Pastor Brian Davidson, Ponca City, Oklahoma, worked over 500 hours on registrations and other preparations before the convention began. That did not include the long hours of the housing committee, headed by Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck and Diane Wolla of Minot, North Dakota.

- Lutheran Brotherhood donated \$7,000 for all the video, lighting and sound equipment used during the convention.

- Special thanks is also due to Aid Association for Lutherans who donated all the convention packets.

- Ferndale, Washington and Bethel Park, Pennsylvania youth arrived at the Denver airport hoping to find affordable transportation to Estes Park. They turned heads when they climbed out of limousines to register at the camp. What the others didn't know was the very special deal given the Washington and Pennsylvania youth by the Christian owner of the limousine service when he heard of their efforts to get to a church youth convention.



The rainy days during the first part of the week did not deter the afternoon recreation times. Pictured is the quarter finals 3-on-3 basketball game between Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Washington, and Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Oregon. Other afternoon activities included miniature golf, crafts, inflatable games, swimming, and a batting clinic by professional baseball player Mike Kingery.

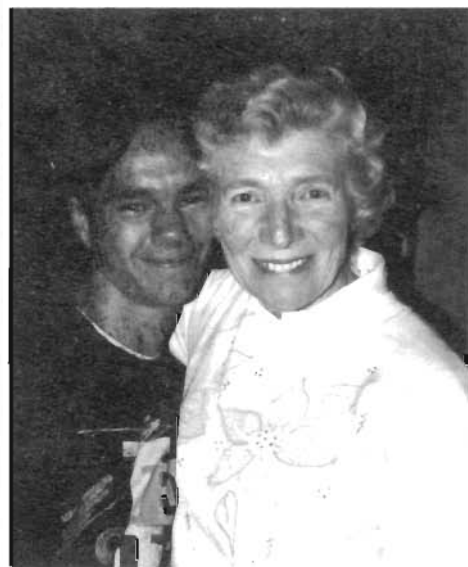
## The spiritual highlight for me at Colorado...

It helped me see God's power over each one of us and how He spoke through all of the speakers we had. They showed us how we need to hold each other accountable for each other's actions and that prayer has awesome power over all our troubles.

—Katrin Winkelmann  
Calvary Lutheran  
Fosston, MN



Pictured are three of the students at the FLY convention who worked at the Second Annual Friendship Language Camp in Petrozavodsk, Russia: Renee Behne, Lowden, Iowa; David Larson, Abercrombie, North Dakota; and Stacy Keller, Wallace, South Dakota. They were among the fourteen American young people who met Pastor Don and Mavis Richman of Eastern European Missions Network, for three weeks this past June. The team worked with Missionaries Steve and Anne May to teach students from grades 5-11, English grammar through Bible stories. Students eagerly learned stories about Jesus and memorized verses from their Russian-English Bibles the team brought. Russian public school teachers helped and they too showed a great desire to read God's Word and learn more about Jesus.



Erick Kiene, First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Eunice Will, Immanuel Lutheran of Springfield, Missouri. Her husband, Pastor Vince Will presented a workshop on, "I Saw Noah's Ark."



# A memorial tribute to *John Strand*

*Listen to advice  
and accept  
instruction,  
and in the end  
you will  
be wise.*

— Proverbs 19:20

Rev. John Strand, my pastor, faithfully preached the Law and Gospel, salvation by **grace** alone, not works! I am an eternally grateful sinner saved by grace.

— Grace Syverson  
Zion Lutheran  
Tioga, North Dakota

There were two brief words of wisdom that Pastor Strand provided for me as president of the AFLC, plus a third recalled from one of his messages many years ago that summarize this memorial tribute. The first and the last were public while the second was private.

When I was elected to my office in 1992, an installation service was planned for September 27 and Rev. Strand was asked to be the speaker. He was willing, but only if it would be helpful to the AFLC. The first word of wisdom to me was a part of his message during the installation service. "Remember," he said, "you have no power." I believe that this statement goes to the heart of his vision for our church body, as well as to the heart of his own sixteen years as president. The AFLC exists for the purpose of serving local congregations, he firmly believed, and the officers are called to be servants, not overlords.

The second word was spoken during a visit to his home three years ago. We discussed some of the issues that were troubling the AFLC at the time, relating them to similar problems in the past. I wondered out loud how was he able to bear the burden of office for so long. "Thine is the kingdom," he declared, adding that this was a reminder which he repeated over and over during his presidency. In other words, his conviction was that the Church belongs to the Lord, not to us. Our peace and joy are in Him, not in the work to which He calls us.

The final word of wisdom, which is closely related to the previous one, was spoken by Pastor Strand in a message at a missionary commissioning service in 1967. The theme was *Go Forth in Joy*, based on Isaiah 55, and he stated these startling words to the future missionary: "I hope that you will not be too successful!" An explanation quickly followed: "For then you would be tempted to rejoice in something other than the Lord Himself." He pointed us to the words of Christ when He admonished his successful disciples: "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

May God grant that Pastor John Strand's legacy of servant leadership centered in Jesus Christ might continue to live in the AFLC!

— Pastor Robert L. Lee



# Well done, good and faithful servant

— Pastor Raynard Huglen  
Newfolden, Minnesota

**W**e knew that death was imminent. In a brief phone conversation three days before it came, he expressed the wish that his struggle were over. Some weeks earlier, in a letter, and in reference to his health, he wrote, "God is in charge and we rest in Him."

That was the Christian attitude and we expected it from Pastor Strand. But when the news finally comes of the death of someone we knew well, it jolts us. An ending has come even though we have the blessed hope. The deaths of family members, close personal friends and co-workers, of good leaders, leave us with a lonely feeling and so I feel regarding the passing of John P. Strand.

Pastor Strand played an integral part in the formation of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. He was one of a few Lutheran Free Church pastors who spoke up in LFC annual conferences to challenge the wisdom of the possible merger with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. When that merger was decided upon, he looked for other alternatives for his own ministry. While he didn't attend as many fellowship meetings leading to the organization of the AFLC as some others did, partly because of the distance involved, he threw his lot with the plans to continue a Lutheran free church fellowship as a separate group.

At the organizational conference in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, in October, 1962, he made a favorable impression on the people present through two presentations in the program and was elected the first president, a position he held for 16 years. It wasn't something he coveted, but he was willing to serve this attempt to have a free Lutheran church desiring to have spiritually alive congregations. Later, he spoke of himself as a "very ordinary man, being given an extraordinary task" and he stated that without the prayers of the people he couldn't do the job.

**A difficult decision** came to him when it seemed necessary for him to leave the parish at Tioga, North Dakota, in order to serve full time as president in Minneapolis. Parish ministry was his first love, but he made the sacri-

fice. It is good that later on he could go back into a parish at Fargo, North Dakota, before retiring.

Pastor Strand experienced the joys and tribulations of being a church leader. God's work is not all joy and peace. The dedications, the anniversaries — these are joyous occasions. Being the recipient, the sounding board, at least, of a lot of problems in the fellowship is not pleasant. There were at times problems in the seminary. I think of the joy it must have been for him when the late Dr. Iver Olson came to be the dean, a man of the same background, a kindred spirit, a supportive influence all around.

**At the beginning** of both the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1964, and the Bible school in 1966, Pastor Strand had to serve as the dean. Some time later on we may come to realize more fully what this man contributed to the establishment of these schools we treasure so much.

Someone said, in a disparaging way, at the time when the AFLC was organizing, that this new free church movement had no Georg Sverdrup. And he was right. There was only one Georg Sverdrup. But we had a man in John Strand who believed in the principles of Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal. He often spoke and wrote of the free and living congregation, that the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth.

As to evangelism, he believed in the evangelistic meeting, and series of meetings, but he wanted evangelists who had a right understanding of the congregation and respect for the Sacraments. He saw Baptism, too, as evangelism, followed by teaching. He warned against "instant evangelism" which has shallow repentance and lack of true commitment.

Pastor Strand had much to say about the ministry. It is a divine appointment, not a spiritual estate. The pastor is not to be an overlord, but a servant, have a humble concern for souls in and out of the congregation, completely devoted to building the kingdom of God, and of good reputation before all. In both pastors and laity, he believed there should be a reluctance to talk about the good things one may be doing and if there be

(continued on next page)

praise, let it come from someone else.

John Strand was forthright. A fellow college student said of him, "You always knew where he stood." He held his opinions strongly and well. A fellow pastor spoke of his integrity.

It was my task to serve as editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* during all the years of John Strand's presidency, beginning in February, 1963. We enjoyed the finest of relationships. I am not so naive as to believe he agreed with everything I wrote editorially or every aspect of the work of the paper, but he never interfered and was always supportive.

John Strand was a young farmer in western North Dakota when he felt God's call to begin preparing for the Christian ministry at his church college, Augsburg in Minneapolis. After ordination he served parishes at Grafton and Tioga. Both of these were multiple parishes and far-flung. At Tioga, he was in the midst of the oil boom in the Williston Basin. What stories he could have told. Then came the years as president and another term as parish pastor. And the years of retirement at the "Shangri-La" he and his beloved wife Millie found south of Remer, Minnesota. They were blessed with three strong sons, daughters-in-law and then grandchildren. God blessed in a wonderful way.

Let me close by quoting something from Pastor Strand's devotional article in the *Ambassador* for July 6, 1982. He was talking to God in the spirit of Psalm 8:

*And, Lord, to think that You died for me! This is high, I cannot attain to this. You thought me worth dying for! And You have not changed. You think the same today, Lord; the only explanation is that You love me! You are concerned about me. You seek me out! You forgive me! You desire to guide me! Yes, You have even gone to prepare a place for me in heaven. "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!"*

Well done, good and faithful servant.  
Enter into the joy of Thy Lord.



# Some thoughts

Pastor John Strand came to Tioga, North Dakota in 1952. To some it was just another pastor coming to town, but for others, the man was special. There was a quality about him that set him apart from others, and he also had children our own age. As we got to know the Strand children, we got to know Pastor Strand.

This is not a eulogy of Pastor Strand, but simply a few thoughts about a man whom God used.

During my teen years he was always there to help us. Stern in confirmation and yet fun loving; concerned and always available. I recall the camping trips to Kennebec, the campfires, the Bible studies and always listening to the baseball games on the radio as we traveled to these events. I can still see Pastors Strand and Agrimson sitting on the bleachers of Tioga High School, cheering on the Pirates or crying out, "bad call, ref!" He led me through some difficult and trying times in those years and, through the Holy Spirit, the Word and his love, brought me to see my sin and the need of Jesus as Lord and Savior. I'm eternally thankful for that.

During my years at seminary, Pastor Strand was always there to give a word of encouragement, explain things in a clear way and give the guidance that was necessary. I remember a Bible camp we were at together in northern Minnesota. We discussed how to increase attendance. I said, "Maybe we should offer prizes for the campers who learn the most Bible verses — good prizes like bikes, radios, etc." He turned and looked at me and said, "Steve, the Word does not need gimmicks to bring souls to Jesus." He was a man who simply lived and loved Jesus.

After seminary, Pastor Strand was always there to give encouragement, advice and to make sure I understood what the Word said when there were times of disagreement. I never could call him, "John." After being confirmed, married and ordained by him he will always be Pastor Strand to me.

My heart would ache for him at times. After retiring as president of the AFLC, he and Millie came to the annual conferences for a while. Pastor Strand would be asked for and would give advice to us from the

# about a man God used

— Pastor Steve Odegaard  
Beaver Creek and Norman Lutheran  
Tioga, North Dakota

conference floor. There were some who did not want to listen to what he had to say. I heard comments like, "We have new leadership now ... He and his thinking are out of date ... That advice is not relevant for today. We must be more progressive."

Pastor Strand believed in and stood on God's eternal Word. He was called by God to lead the AFLC in the very beginning through some difficult and trying times as a church. Those days were not easy for him personally. He led us in the Word. Many times he would say, "Let's see what God's Word says about this," and we would look it up.

In later years, Linda and I knew that Pastor Strand and Millie were praying for us, even though we were not physically together much. I knew he was only a phone call away and would help if I asked him to. Yes, I'll miss him. I will try to live and share the Word as he taught me to do.

I remember a time when Pastor Strand was having a serious operation. The anesthesiologist mentioned that after this operation, Pastor Strand would be going home. He looked up from his bed and said,



This photo was taken at the author's Ordination Service in 1970, Tioga, North Dakota. (L. to R.), Pictured are: Pastors John Strand, Robert Lee, Stephen Odegaard, Julius Hermunsle, and Larry Severson.

"Yes, I will, either to my earthly home or home to be with Jesus, and either one is fine."

I look forward to being with him and many loved ones in the church triumphant.

Blessed be his memory.



***It was good of you to  
share in my troubles ...  
the gifts you sent ...  
are a fragrant offering,  
an acceptable sacrifice,  
pleasing to God.  
And my God will meet  
all your needs according  
to his glorious  
riches in Christ Jesus.  
To our God and Father  
be glory for ever and  
ever. Amen.***

—Philippians 4:14, 18-20

## Thank you from the people in Grand Forks, North Dakota

Your kind gift to our congregation in the aftermath of the flood last spring was greatly appreciated. We have been overwhelmed by the thoughtful generosity of the Lord's people in responding to our need. We trust you have experienced the greater blessedness that comes with the giving.

After getting the damage to our church building fixed, we are using the remaining funds to help people in our congregation and community who have needs. Several families in our church lost their entire home and most member's homes had some damage. We are thankful that we are able

to offer assistance to those who need it. Several families have moved out of our community. We shall miss them.

The work of recovery and rebuilding will continue for years. We do not know what the long-term affect of the flood will be but we are confident that the Lord who sits enthroned over the flood will give strength to his people and bless them with peace (Psalm 29:10-11). We sincerely thank you for your gift to us but above all thank you for upholding us in prayer. God has blessed us with peace.

— Pastor Bruce Dalager  
Trinity Free Lutheran

## letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

Among the various men whom I have appreciated through the years are two pastors. One was my confirmation pastor, James Asp. I think he became even more special when he became part of the AFLC. Pastor Asp was a speaker in all of the congregations I have served. Wherever he went, there he was used by the Lord. I have some of his sermons on tape and will treasure listening to them. He served my home ELC parish in Harrisburg, South Dakota.

The other was Pastor John Strand. I had the privilege of

working alongside of him as secretary of the AFLC. We worked together for three years. I loved him for the stands he made in our AFLC. During my early years as a pastor, he was a strong encouragement. We enjoyed each other's company. The last time was when we were at Pastor Steve and Linda Odegaard's 25th wedding anniversary in Tioga, North Dakota. He understood the AFLC and gave himself to it.

May the Lord be praised for the mighty gifts He has given the Church!

Pastor Dennis Gray  
Greenbush, Minnesota

## Lutheran Free Church centennial commemorated in September

The Lutheran Free Church came into existence 100 years ago this past June. Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal, leaders of the new group, encouraged the adoption of what became known as the "Twelve Guiding Principles," rather than organizing with an official constitution. The significant concept of the new group was the idea that the local congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth.

Augsburg College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, were the schools of the LFC. The Seminary later merged with what is now Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Then in 1962, the LFC voted to merge with the American Lutheran Church. According to the September, 1997, *Metro Lutheran*, "A minority of LFC members dissented and departed to form the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). As a result, many within the ELCA and all within the present AFLC claim the LFC as their spiritual parent."

A 100th anniversary celebration was held at Augsburg College on September 20, 1997. Day-long activities included a worship service and ended with an evening concert by The Centennial Singers, a men's chorus honoring the heritage of the Augsburg Male Quartet.

What follows is a reprint of excerpts from the sermon by Professor Georg Sverdrup at the meeting of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis on June 9, 1897.

## The AFLC Foundation

+ **providing** stewardship opportunities for your accumulated assets.

+ **arranging** for your gifts to grow beyond face value, benefitting you and the AFLC.

+ **supporting** AFLC ministries.

**Contact:** Ernie Miedema at the AFLC headquarters — 1-612-545-5631 or Mark D. Johnson at 1-800-950-2109

## AFLC Foundation offers assistance

Opportunities to be faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us abound! This includes our current cash income and accumulated assets. The AFLC Foundation was organized in 1995 to assist individuals who wish to support the ministries of the AFLC while at the same time provide income for themselves.

James Rolf, AFLC Foundation president, put it simply, "It's a win-win situation for both the individual and the charitable organization." The Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) is one of the vehicles recommended by the foundation. Contributions to the church ministries are maximized, potential tax savings are available, and all while providing personal income.

At the last AFLC Annual Conference, the Foundation Board elected James Rolf of Brandon, Minnesota, as chairman. Other board members are Ken Williams, Ishpeming, Michigan, vice president; Pastor Dan Klug, East Grand Forks, Minnesota, secretary; Robert Deitsche, Osceola, Wisconsin, treasurer; Allen Anderson, Clear Lake, Wisconsin; Steve Johnson, Upsala, Minnesota; Rick Rasmussen, Monticello, Minnesota; and Ralph Peterson, Portland, North Dakota.

The foundation is working with Ernie Miedema, the AFLC Director of Development and Mark Johnson, CFP, of Fountain Professional Group, Inc. for financial counseling and administration services. For more information call Mr. Miedema at 1-612-545-5631 or Mr. Johnson at 1-800-950-2190. Experience the rewards immediately and eternally.



# The Spirit of Freedom

**B**rethren! We have gathered today with the desire and the prayer that we ourselves may be free and become fit to help others to freedom. It is in the interest of freedom we meet. We will speak and sing about freedom; we will pray and work for it. With this in mind we have chosen this word from the Prophet Isaiah (61:1-4). We will hold on to this word, and it will be fulfilled in us. The word of freedom will strike the right note and resound mightily in our hearts and in our meeting. If it finds its way into the soul of someone, it shall not return void, but it shall accomplish that which is pleasing unto the Lord, and it shall prosper in the things whereunto He sent it.

If we ourselves are to become free and fit to work for the freedom of others, this word must be fulfilled in us: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me." We cannot become co-workers with God and share in the work of Jesus Christ without having His Spirit and power. Like work demands like qualifications. To work for the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of the congregation without the Spirit is vain. But all things are made possible by the Spirit.

Do we have the Spirit, brethren — the Spirit of Jesus Christ? The words of our test call us to a sincere self-examination. People who are spiritually dead will say that we have no need of the Spirit. We have the Word of God; that is sufficient. It is dangerous to speak

about the Spirit; that is something vague and uncertain. It is just as dangerous to talk about the Spirit as to talk about freedom and life. Yes, it is dangerous, but maybe it is necessary. It is not right to try to evade self-examination and comfort ourselves with the thought that we can get along without the Spirit.

Perhaps self-examination would make us realize both our lack of spirituality, and that without the power of the Spirit we cannot live as Christians nor help others onto the narrow road of freedom.

Verily, this would be a good beginning. If we must acknowledge and confess that we are carnal minded and are always looking for human help and lack spirituality, is our case hopeless? Is there no fountain from which we can draw water? Yes, there is one who invites us, "If any one thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." Jesus speaks here about the Spirit those who believe on Him shall receive. What we lack, Jesus will supply. He has the Spirit without measure. Whosoever is in Him receives the Spirit. He bids you meet Him on Calvary today. There you shall become fit to serve God as an evangelist, preach good tidings to the poor and proclaim release to the captives. Without the baptism of the Spirit you are not fit for service. When you have found release you can proclaim release to all

captives. You can show them where to find release. The Gospel of the Cross gives release both for time and eternity, for heaven and earth. Anything like it can never be found.

How shall the Church be cleansed from the filth of worldliness? By love — the love of God must impel us to witness and work for Christ. The love of God must constrain us to seek the lost souls, to disturb the worldly-minded and awaken them from the sleep unto death. The love of God must constrain us to work for Christian homes, in order that the coming generation may learn from childhood to love God and live in the atmosphere of spiritual freedom. When they attain to maturity they will live self-sacrificing lives of love.

Shall we dedicate ourselves to this service? Shall we covenant with God and with each other to love Him and the souls He bought so dearly and the Church He purchased with His own blood?

Then we shall have joy even in tribulation. The free congregation bears the mark of the cross. But through tribulations it will attain to the glory of Christ. Although we here must groan under the bondage of corruption, we shall, if we remain faithful, attain the glorious freedom of God's children on the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

*— reprinted from  
The Lutheran Messenger  
August 13, 1946*

# 100 Years

**Eden, South Dakota** — Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church was formally organized on June 20, 1897 when thirty-one people met, adopted a constitution and elected officers. They were affiliated with The Norwegian Synod. Worship services were held in a school until the church was constructed in 1904. Services were conducted in Norwegian until the 1920s. During the next twenty years, at least one service a month was conducted in Norwegian. Today a Christmas service in that language is held in December. The congregation joined the AFLC in 1971. They are part of the Lake Region Parish in Roslyn, South Dakota, along with Saron, Tabor, and until 1996, Hope Lutheran. They are served by Pastor Lynn Wilson.

Buffalo Lake's centennial celebration will be September 27-28, 1997. AFLC President Robert Lee will be the guest speaker along with former pastors Raymond Huglen, Howard Kjos and Rodney Stueland.

**Leeds, North Dakota** — Lebanon Lutheran in Leeds and North Prairie Lutheran seven miles north of town celebrated their 100th anniversaries this past summer.

Lebanon Lutheran was organized at the home of Andrew Olson in 1897, by Rev. E. O. Larson and became a member of the newly formed Lutheran Free Church. An ingathering for a church building began in 1899, and within a year, a church was built and nearly paid for.

In 1937, lightning struck and the church burned to the ground. The following year a church building was moved to the original site. This building served the

congregation until 1976, when Lebanon began meeting in the newly purchased sanctuary of the former Christian Missionary Alliance church, located in the village of Leeds.

The congregation is part of a parish with North Prairie Lutheran and is served by Pastor Mark Antal. North Prairie also traces its beginnings to 1897, when it was organized as North Prairie Scandinavian Lutheran Free Church.

Pastor A. A. Brunsvold served the congregation for 21 years until 1918. He began his ministry on a \$125 annual salary plus gifts of farm produce of every kind. During the early days of settlement, services were conducted in schoolhouses and homes. The men would sit on the right side and the women on the left. When there was a full house, children would sit around the edge of the speaker's platform.

In 1916 the present church was completed. This summer's anniversary program included the following poem by Manley Gjerde:

*These years have passed  
And left a story that is told  
Of immigrants and pioneers bold  
Who crossed the seas —  
They braved the plains the land  
to claim,  
Their dreams and plans of home  
became realities.*

*These years have passed  
And left their marks across  
the way  
Where shadows fell at close  
of day  
And life was o'er  
for those who labored through  
the years —  
Who knew life's laughter and  
its tears  
But are no more.*

## AFLC congregations celebrate anniversaries

### 10 Years

**London, Minnesota** — On June 29, 1997 Faith Lutheran celebrated its 10th anniversary. From the beginning of twenty families gathering in an old town hall, the growing congregation of 55 family units now enjoys a sanctuary seating over 200, built in 1991, just two blocks from the original meeting place. Pastor Einar Unseth has served the congregation since 1988.

*These years have passed  
And may their vision  
brighter grow  
While tides across time's  
steady flow  
Bring newer light —  
To consecrate again the aim  
Of generations still the same  
To do the right.*

*These years have passed  
But yet the task is just begun  
God's grace is new with every sun  
Which He will give,  
and when He leads the road  
is right  
To lead us out of dark to Light  
That we may live.*

# 150 Years



Freedom Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Illinois.



St. Petrie Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Illinois.



Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Illinois.

**Ottawa, Illinois** — Freedom and St. Petrie Lutheran Churches of rural Ottawa, celebrated their 150th anniversary during June 18-22, 1997. The celebration began with a worship service on Wednesday evening focusing on God's faithfulness. A community Talent Jamboree and Ice Cream Social was held on Friday evening with a wide range of people performing, including some from Branson, Missouri. On Saturday, a Friends of Freedom and St. Petrie picnic was held with an old fashioned sing-along following. AFLC President Robert Lee spoke at the Sunday morning worship service and at the afternoon rededication service.

Former pastors present were H. Alfred Weltzin, Sigurd N. Larson, Odell Kittleson, and Mark Olson. A greeting was given by each along with letters read from T. S. Maakestad and James T. Ericksen.

The congregations were organized on November 18, 1847 as The  
(continued on next page)

**Newark, Illinois** — Helmar Lutheran Church celebrated its 150th anniversary on August 30-31, 1997. Weekend events featured the theme, "Great is Thy Faithfulness," with former members and pastors sharing — including AFLC President Robert Lee who served the congregation from 1990-92, and Pastors Kenneth Ellingson, Dean Whitney, Harold Masted and Ron Christian.

The North Prairie (Helmar) community was settled by Norwegian immigrants in the 1840s and early '50s. Elling Eielsen, the first ordained Norwegian Lutheran pastor in America, had arrived  
(continued on next page)

## OTTAWA 150 YEARS

Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Indian Creek, LaSalle County, Illinois. Before the official church was organized, services and prayer meetings had been held at different homes and at a meeting house located on a farm as far back as 1836.

St. Petrie Lutheran, which was known as the Big Indian Lutheran Church, was built in 1874. Pastor Sven Oftedal, who was later instrumental in founding the Lutheran Free Church, was one of the pastors participating in the dedication service in 1875. In 1908 the name was changed to St. Petrie.

Freedom Lutheran Church held its meetings in the "Old Meeting House" on a local farm until 1882, when a new church building was erected.

The congregations celebrate this milestone with praise to God for His faithfulness and rededication to the mission at hand. The parish is served by Pastor Warren Swanson.

## HELMAR 150 YEARS

in the area in 1839 to minister to the spiritual needs. School houses were built for the children's religious instruction and often laymen conducted the worship services when the pastor was away preaching.

In 1850, P. A. Rasmussen left Norway for America. He met Eielsen in Wisconsin and walked about 300 miles to the Helmar area to teach and preach. In 1854, Rasmussen was 25 years old when he was called to be Helmar's first pastor, a position he held until 1898. There were 85 members in 1858, who paid their pastor \$300 yearly plus one bushel of wheat from every 40 acres.

The first church was built in 1859 and in 1901, the present church, which seats 550, was

## Parish Education update

New Kindergarten curriculum is now available in the Ambassador Sunday School Series. "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" is New Testament Bible stories on Jesus' life and ministry with full-page color illustrations, stories, activities, and music in the student books, and a complete teacher manual.

New Ambassador Publications catalogs have been sent to the Sunday school superintendents of

all AFLC churches. Additional catalogs are available to churches or individuals upon request.

Be sure to order the *Christian Education Calendar* (\$.50). It's a helpful guide for pastors, Christian education committees, and teachers. This month-by-month list of recommendations for planning the entire year is available through AFLC Parish Education at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55441 or call (612) 545-5631.

## Book review

### Georg Sverdrup: Champion of the Free Congregation

— by Francis W. Monseth, Th. D.

You'll enjoy this little book that can be read in one sitting and purchased for a small price of \$3 from our Parish Education office. Certainly it is not little in its impact upon both heart and mind. Scholarly in form, the book is also evangelical and evangelistic.

Coming in mid-adulthood to the AFLC, as I did, from a local church which was true to God's Word and warm in Christian fellowship and love for Bible study, but from a synod which had left its first love; the book helped me better understand the AFLC — the church I have come to love.

The book presents Georg Sverdrup, his life of dedication to Christ and His Church, to evangelical teaching and to free and living congregations. I first read the book during our country's Independence Day season, and its discussion of Sverdrup's love of freedom touched my heart. Sverdrup came to America because he knew that his beloved Lutheran Church would find freedom here.

Dr. Monseth's little book brings back fond memories of Augsburg College — the times in the dorms where jokes were about Sverdrup's and Oftedal's "likenesses" being on the sugar bowls, and of course the chapel services and dear friends of my youth.

Buy this little book and read it. You won't regret it.

Dr. Mary Lindquist  
Trinity Lutheran  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

built for \$12,000.

Helmar began discussing the use of the English language as early as the 1870s. Ladies' groups began organizing. Sunday school was organized in 1895, which included two Bible classes — one for men and one for women. Children's classes began in 1916. All classes were concerned about youth and adults knowing Jesus. Parish education is still important as Helmar's Sunday school currently has 150 for average attendance. Throughout the years, Helmar has been "home" to numerous missionaries around the world.

Helmar became a part of the AFLC in 1988. The present pastor is Rev. Jeff Swanson.



## 1997 Fall WMF Rallies

**Newark, Illinois** — West Lisbon Lutheran will host the Illinois District rally on October 4.

**Dexter, Minnesota** — Zion Lutheran hosted the rally on September 13, for the Central Tri-State District. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles were the speakers.

**Bloomington, Minnesota** — Emmaus Lutheran is hosting the Minneapolis District WMF rally on October 18. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles will be the speakers.

**Centerville, South Dakota** — Immanuel Lutheran will host the South Dakota District rally on September 27. Jeff and Marci Scholten, missionaries in Russia, will be the speakers.

**Portland, North Dakota** — The Eastern North Dakota District will hold its rally at Valley Free Lutheran on September 27. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles will be the speakers.

**Blue Grass, Minnesota** — Bethany Lutheran will host the SW Central Minnesota District rally on Tuesday, October 7, at 9:30 A.M. The Giles family will be the speakers.

**Kalispell, Montana** — The Stillwater and Faith Lutheran congregations hosted the Pacific Northwest District rally on September 20, with Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles sharing.

**Springfield, Missouri** — Immanuel Lutheran is hosting the annual South Central District pastors' meeting and WMF rally on October 6-7. Pastor Ted and Dee Berkas, Fosston, Minnesota, join Home Missions Director, Paul Nash as the speakers. The far flung South Central District includes Immanuel's neighboring congregation, St. Paul's in Branson, to Faith Lutheran in El Campo, Texas and over to Abiding Word in Melbourne, Florida.

**Beulah, North Dakota** — The home mission congregation, Prince of Peace Lutheran, will hold their fall special meetings during October 19-23, with Pastor Jon Wellumson of Williston, North Dakota, speaking.

**Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles**, are temporarily living in a home near Amery, Wisconsin, while the new mission house, the Eagle's Nest, continues to be readied for use. Until they can move into the home, please use 123 E. St. George, Grantsburg, WI 54840 as their address. Their Amery phone number is (715) 268-4590.

**Experienced carpenters are especially needed** to finish the work on the mission house! Housing is available at the nearby ARC for all volunteers! For more information call the ARC at 1 (800) 294-2877 or e-mail at: [thearc@win.bright.net](mailto:thearc@win.bright.net)

**Missionaries Kenneth and Carola Stenberg** died as the result of a car accident near their Lake Stevens, Washington home on August 20, 1997. Carola died in the accident and Ken the next day. Ken was born on June 17, 1917 and raised in Farland, North Dakota. His education included a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and degrees in theology and education. Carola, born on October 12, 1921 and raised in Frost, Minnesota, earned a diploma and RN in nursing and a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics from Augsburg College. Following service in World War II they both traveled independently as missionaries to Japan and a few years later met and married. After time spent in the United States they returned to the mission field, this time in Brazil. They came back to the U. S. and settled in the Everett, Washington area in 1965. Carola returned

**Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud**, Maple Grove, Minnesota, are continuing their furlough and deputation ministry until their scheduled return to Brazil on January 6, 1998. During September 5-7, they conducted evangelistic services at Christian Free Lutheran in Wheatland, Iowa. To contact them call the World Missions office at (612) 545-5631 or at their home at 8758 Cottonwood Lane, Maple Grove, MN 55369; phone (612) 315-4376.

**India, Portugal, and Mozambique**, are countries scheduled to be visited late in October of this year by representatives of the AFLC World Missions. AFLC President Robert Lee and Brazil Missionary Connely Dyrud plan to visit a Lutheran fellowship group in Portugal before meeting World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein in Mozambique, Africa. Pastor Enderlein will join them in that southeastern African nation after his visit with the Bible Faith Lutheran Church in India. The annual conference last summer encouraged World Missions to gather more information from the contacts in the Portuguese speaking nation of Mozambique, located across the channel from the island nation of Madagascar.

to nursing and Ken worked as a high school teacher, carpenter and author of several books. They continued to be involved in missions with short-term trips to Central America. They were active members of Elim Lutheran Church. They are survived by four children: Jonathan Stenberg, Evangeline Kellogg, Gracia Gilbertson and Naomi Stenberg, as well as seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Blessed be their memory.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Pastor Mel Meyer**, Amery, Wisconsin has resigned as pastor of Amery Free Lutheran where he has served since 1994. Currently he is available for interim parish ministry.

**Pastor Clyde Grier**, Milford, Illinois has resigned as pastor of St. John's Lutheran in order to accept the call to serve Our Saviour's Lutheran in Dickinson, North Dakota. He began his new ministry on September 1.

**Pastor Thomas Baker**, Evergreen Park, Illinois, has accepted a call to serve Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tulia, Texas, and will begin his ministry there in September.

**Pastor Dennis Gray**, United Free Lutheran in Greenbush, Minnesota announces the existence of a web information page for United. It may be accessed by typing in <http://www.rrv.net/uflc>. You will learn about United and find a listing of all the AFLC congregations and pastors in the Northwest Minnesota area. Also featured are various youth resources that can be accessed. Eventually, there will be articles on youth work written by Pastor Gray. The AFLC web page can be accessed from this site. This will tie you into the AFLC youth ministries department at the headquarters. The youth work page comes because of a desire of Pastor Gray to be involved with this ministry. He continues to be available for youth-related events and evangelistic meetings.

**Lake Stevens, Washington** — Elim Lutheran has begun a building program that will provide a new Christian Education wing and a gymnasium/multipurpose facility. The congregation covets your prayers as they seek to expand their ability for community outreach. Elim is served by Pastor Mike Crowell and youth director, Matthew Greven.

**Silverhill, Alabama** — Zion Lutheran Church in Silverhill, invites all "snow birds" to consider South Alabama for your winter holiday. The church is about 30 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico and about 20 miles east of Mobile Bay. The areas of Gulf Shores and the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay are family oriented. Many from the upper Midwest winter in these communities. The only AFLC church in Alabama would love to meet and worship with you. Y'all come.

A record enrollment of 148 students at AFLBS is filling the dorm space and classroom facilities. To accommodate the large numbers, the junior class will be split into two tracks with an extra classroom in one side of the cafeteria. More interim teachers from the Twin Cities area will help with the increased teaching load. The first semester began September 8, 1997.

**Pat Hendrickson**, Plymouth, Minnesota has resigned as head cook for the AFLC schools, a position she served in for nine years. Her husband, Clyde, continues to serve as head of the campus maintenance department.

**Bill Kroll**, Woodbury, Minnesota is the new head cook for the AFLC schools. Bill is a 1994 AFLBS graduate and will be initially working with the food service staff from the Association Retreat Center and their director, Eric Westlake.

**Campus Days this fall!** It's something new. AFLBS has added another weekend to its annual spring Campus Days. On the weekend of October 24-26, high school students are invited to experience AFLBS campus life on the shores of Medicine Lake in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Call the Bible School office at (612) 544-9501 for more information.



Aerial view of Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, WA

## It can get messy

**W**orking with youth can get messy, in more ways than one. It doesn't take too many too long to give the room you meet in that "lived-in look." Evidence of their presence is often left behind in the area they occupy. Cleanup usually needs to be done.

Youth work, and working with people of any age, is in some ways like cleanup work. We come to ones whose life is not looking like it should. It's a mess. They've spread plenty of dirt around themselves. The world has added all kinds of stains as well. It looks like tearing down and rebuilding is called for instead of cleaning. And yet God says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

God is in the business of cleaning up messes. So we go to mixed-up, messed-up kids with the good news of Jesus' love and power and invite them to open their lives up for the Lord to do His incredible cleansing work.

Going to those who need cleaning is often complicated and difficult. It's simpler and a lot more pleasant to go to those who already have their lives cleaned up and give them rewards and praise.

I cleaned restrooms and showers at a state park as a summer job. We liked it when we found a restroom that was already pretty clean. We would have preferred to stay out of the messy ones, but then we wouldn't have been doing our job. We were in the job of cleaning, especially the messy ones.

Our job as Christ's ambassadors to this needy world is to go first of all to the places that are messy, not the places that are already clean. We are not to look for the lives that are already sparkling to reward them. We are to be on the lookout for the lives that are dirty because of sin, and search for ways we can enter those lives with the beautiful cleansing power of the gospel.

Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Matthew 9:12, NIV). If we are going to be involved in His work of being witnesses for Him to the next generation, we need to hang around "sick" kids. These are the kids who don't know any Bible stories. They may not have a clue as to "how to act" in church. Their clothes and hair may

look a little odd to us. They may never have heard a hymn in their life. The music they do listen to may make us wonder if it has something to do with the origin of the word "headbanger."

They are in need of the Great Physician who is Jesus. He goes to them, and calls us to go to them, before they become well. They won't be healed, they won't become clean otherwise.

The Free Lutheran Youth convention was a great experience. It was full of a lot of neat kids and being around them for a week was fun, exciting, challenging and more. Not all the kids in attendance, however, were as white as snow. A number were unchurched. Many came from homes that were far from perfect to say the least. They often had deep spiritual, mental and emotional wounds; some self-inflicted and some inflicted by others. It was great they were there, but we must ask the question: how do you reach those kinds of kids with the good news of Jesus?

Those kids may not be reached in the ways that worked with previous generations. We can't expect them to already have what we consider the "right" kind of taste in music and dress. We can't expect them to know what the Bible says and be doing it. They need training and healing and cleansing.

This work often involves using unique means. It requires change. It can get messy. But we need to ask, what is most important? Holding to our traditions or pointing people to the Savior? Clinging to our preferences or teaching kids to cling to Jesus?

Necessary in this work is a clear understanding as to what type of cleansing is most important. The things we often think need to be cleaned up are not the real problem. They may be simply matters of taste and style, or symptoms of what is really wrong. We must be careful we do not simply clean up the outside of a person and neglect the inside. It is the heart that first and foremost needs to be made clean. We are called to bring them to Jesus who can heal the condition and not just treat the symptoms.

Jesus is at work in the lives of young people in ways that at times confuse us. Let's not ignore it or fight it but let Him work in us and through us in ways that will surprise and amaze us.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"We must be careful we do not simply clean up the outside of a person and neglect the inside."**

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## BUILDING THE BASE

### Sven Oftedal: the forgotten founder

Most everyone in the AFLC has heard of Georg Sverdrup, the brilliant theologian, professor, and founder of the Lutheran Free Church. But raise the name of Sven Oftedal, the co-founder, and one often gets a blank stare or an "Uff da who?"

Sven Oftedal was the reserved Sverdrup's inseparable friend, colleague, confidant, and the flamboyant side of Augsburg's "dynamic duo." From the their student days at the University of Oslo to their deaths just after the turn of the century, they were an inseparable team that fought for the freedom of the congregation.

According to Carl Chrislock in *From Fjord to Freeway*, August Weenaas, founder and first president of Augsburg College who recruited the young theologians in 1873-4, referred to Sverdrup as "the mind" and Oftedal as "the spirit." They complemented each other: where Sverdrup was the brilliant thinker and writer, Oftedal was the articulate speaker and motivator. Where Sverdrup reached the minds of the people, Oftedal reached their hearts.

Sverdrup became president of Augsburg College, while Oftedal became Chairman of the Board of Trustees. When Oftedal first arrived, funds were so low that professors often received half salaries. By 1877 Augsburg was \$16,000 in debt. Oftedal organized a campaign to wipe out the debt in three months. To do this, he founded the

newspaper *Folkebladet*, mailed it to every congregation outlining a strategy for raising money, announced that if the money was not raised by January of 1878, all the funds would be returned, and Augsburg would die. So powerful was Oftedal in articulating the need, that in spite of the grasshopper plague of 1877, farmers sacrificed to save Augsburg. To prevent future financial crises, Oftedal built an endowment fund of \$50,000 in just two years.

Furthermore, as professors of theology, he and Sverdrup drew up the *Fundamental Principles* and *Rules for Work* that established the Lutheran Free Church and still guides the AFLC today.

Oftedal led the court fight in the 1890s to maintain the corporation's control of Augsburg over the United Church. In June of 1898 when the Supreme Court of Minnesota handed down the decision that Augsburg belonged to the corporation and not the synod, it was Oftedal who interrupted the Second Annual Conference of the LFC with the good news that resulted in a spontaneous service of thanksgiving to God. The jubilation, however, was later dampened when the full decision was learned. The LFC corporation could keep the property and buildings, but the \$50,000 endowment fund must go to St. Olaf, the United Church school.

It is with a smile one reads a student evaluation of Oftedal's teaching:

though much admired "one sometimes got the impression that he came to class unprepared" (Chrislock). Considering Oftedal's church and civic involvement, this would be understandable. Along with his duties at Augsburg, he served for many years as pastor of Trinity Church and organized several churches in Minneapolis. Five years after arriving in America, he was elected to the Minneapolis Board of Education where he served ten years, four as chairman. He was also a member of the Minneapolis Library Board where he conceived of and successfully installed the branch library system in order to bring books to immigrant neighborhoods.

Oftedal was an exceptional linguist. According to Lars Lillehei in *Augsburg Seminary and the Lutheran Free Church*, "he mastered twenty or more ... modern languages." He especially loved the Greek language and became a close friend of the Greek community in Minneapolis where he often addressed them in their own language.

Because Sverdrup was such a prolific writer, it is understandable that a hundred years later he would be more easily remembered. But what we should not forget is how God used these remarkable men — Oftedal and Sverdrup, each with his separate gifts — to work together to build His church on earth.

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