

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 4, 2001



explore the 2001 youth convention



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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Blessings from the basics

The "Confession of Sin for Morning Worship" contains this petition, "by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will." Each of us needs to make such a petition to God for we can only know Him through the enlightenment of the Spirit.

There is an assumed knowledge of God, which is common to man. It is often said out of ignorance or for the sake of compromise that the religions of man "all have the same god." This is not true. God has distinctly and precisely revealed Himself in His Word. Any attribute of God or any assumed truth concerning God, no matter how widely accepted by man, is false if it is not in accord with His Word. We need to beware of the darkness about us which is said to be light.

We also need to petition God to "increase in us true knowledge of Him and His will" because of the enemy of our soul within us. If you listen carefully, you will hear many people, including professing Christians, tell what they believe or "feel" to be true regarding the nature and will of God. The assumption is that God is somehow obligated to conform to our reason, our desires and our experience. If God appears to not be reasonable and considerate of our feelings, people often feel justified in questioning His motives and His very person, and going their own way. This is a temptation and sin common to all of us because it is the very nature of sin within us to attempt to dethrone God and make Him subservient to our will.

When we find ourselves, either in thought or speech, trying to hold God hostage to our will, we need grace to be able to pray such a petition. When we make statements of faith, i.e. "I believe" or "I feel," but have no clear basis in the Word of God for that belief or feeling, we are placing our fallen nature on the throne.

God has revealed Himself to us in His Word and in His Son, the Living Word. In Hebrews 7:28, NEB and KJV, we are enlightened as to Christ's humanity and, at the same time, His opposite nature from ours. "Such a High Priest does indeed fit our conditions, devout (holy), guileless (harmless), undefiled, separated from sinners." Christ is separated from sinners by His holy nature and His undefiled life. "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

In His holiness, God is opposite of our sinful nature and, therefore, is able to save us.

When we ask God to bow to our will rather than our bowing to His, we are asking that sin have its way with us. To demand that God conform to our reason or feelings, is to demand that He compromise His holiness. In short, when we would determine the nature and will of God according to our natural desires, we reject the true God and Savior.

We need grace from God to pray "by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will." Then take up His Word so that the Holy Spirit may enlighten us. God has not hidden Himself and He gladly does His will for those who will trust Him. God is not who men want Him to be. That is why He was crucified. God is who men need Him to be. That is why He went to cross.

Many of us have prayed this petition often, and as we have taken up the Word of God, we've found that God has already answered. He has met us in His Word and has gloriously revealed Himself to us that our soul's desire and joy is that "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30).

May God so bless each of us.

—Pastor Dale Mellgren
Mt. Carmel and Trinity Lutheran
McIntosh, Minnesota

Only Jesus could do it

Report on the 2001 Free Lutheran Youth Convention

—Pastor Craig Johnson
Editor, Lutheran Ambassador

A group of well-organized people could put on a convention for 1,525 young people and adults. Talented musicians could rehearse and perform nice sounding music and get others to sing along. Folks with the ability to put together entertaining recreation times could be found. But only Jesus can transform lives the way He did at the 2001 Free Lutheran Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, July 16 to 21.

"I'm trading my sorrows, I'm trading my shame, ... I'm trading my sickness, I'm trading my pain, ... I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord." Those were the words of a song sung at the convention and the attitude of many lives.

"There's a lot of stuff I've been through," was the testimony of one teenage girl. "A lot of things have happened in my life," shared another. Some spoke of being set free from "awful stuff." Others described some of their trials: parents fighting and divorcing, police being called to the home, deaths of loved ones, serious accidents and illnesses. And yet often after having shared some heart-wrenching testimony of what they have been through, many students said as one did, "God has blessed our family."

Only Jesus can give that kind of attitude.

Only Jesus can keep a young person faithful to Him, and some students shared testimonies of that. One expressed, "Thanks to God for keeping me a good kid. All the credit goes to Him." Others spoke of how they knew only Jesus could keep them faithful. "Pray for me. I've made these commitments before but fallen back."

The students and their advisors gathered from all over the country at the YMCA of the Rockies for the Monday afternoon through Friday night convention. The FLY conven-

tions are held every other year.

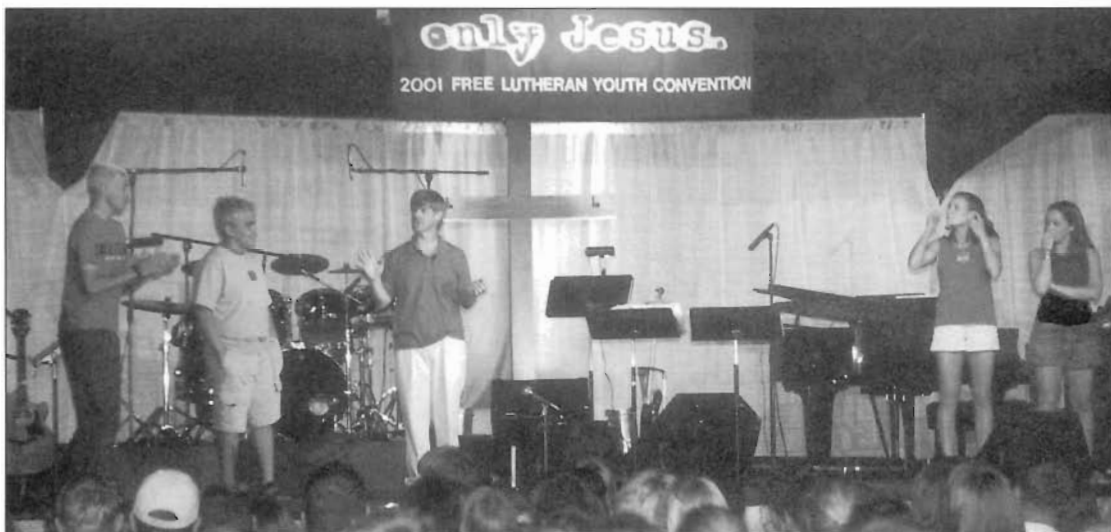
Attempts are made during the week to draw young people to Jesus, minister to their various and diverse needs, and encourage them to keep walking with Jesus.

Each day at the convention began with a morning worship time. Everyone was then split into three groups to spend an hour "Exploring God's Word" in a large group Bible study. This was followed by an hour during which

(continued on next page)



Pastor Jim Ritter, Parker, Colorado, led a morning study on Philemon.



Pastor Kevin Garner, Norway, Illinois was one of the evening speakers.



Pastor Tim Johnson, Fertile, Minnesota led a Bible study for the younger teens.



Kelsey Pasquini, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

CONVENTION REVIEW



Merlin Satren, Lakeville, Minnesota, led an elective on "Is a Monkey Your Uncle?"

elective workshops were offered. The 45 different workshops to choose from included topics such as: "Living the Christian Life at College," "Personal Evangelism," "How Can I Be Sure God Exists?" "Who am I and What am I Doing Here?" "Drugs: More than a High," "Life without a Dad," "How to Help a Friend Who's Dating the Wrong Kind of Guy," "Healing from the Past, Hope for the Future," along with other topics. A diversity of workshops existed in recognition of the diversity of needs among the students.



Lyle Forde, Arlington, Washington led the afternoon choir rehearsal in the Long House. The AFLC Parish Education department had Bibles and devotional books available for purchase at a table also in the Long House where the large group sessions were held. Youth were encouraged to continue nurturing a daily devotional life in God's Word.

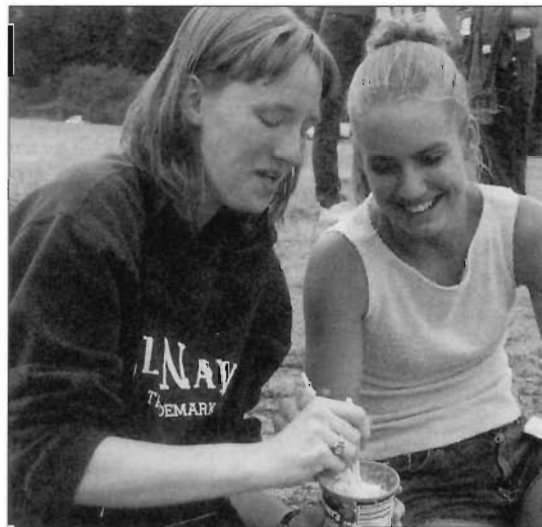


Before departing for home, the Roseau, Minnesota youth posed for one more picture.

Following the workshops students gathered into large groups again for topical studies on areas of defending the faith, discovering your purpose and God's view of the family.

Afternoons at the convention were a time for recreation. Choices available included climbing in the mountains around the park, basketball, volleyball, miniature golf, horseback riding, swimming, crafts, inflatable games and spending time with old and new friends. Also happening in the afternoons was choir rehearsal, a talent show, a drama put on one afternoon by one youth group, and a concert by Jeremy Erickson another afternoon.

Even evening was a time of worship. A praise band served as lead worshippers. A pair of actors, Custer and Hoose, performed a drama that continued each evening. They took on the roles of childhood friends who went through the various stages of life, facing trials together and encouraging one another to remain faithful to the Lord. Messages from God's Word were shared each evening as well. Students were encouraged to "Keep the faith and don't be deceived."



Jessica Campbell and Hope Mikkelsen, Brandon, Minnesota, took an afternoon ice cream break.



During two afternoons, inflatable games tested balance and strength and added fun competition for the youth.

They were called to be disciples of Christ with the reminder that this is "a call to total surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Following the evening services were afterglow times. These were times of worship and also times when young people were given the opportunity to share about what God had been doing in their lives.

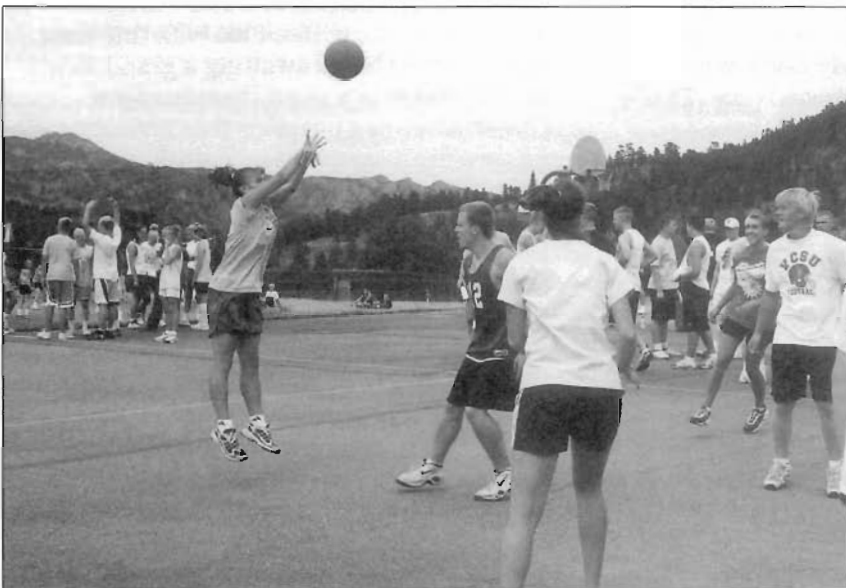
During the Friday afternoon of the convention the FLY business meeting was held. Elected FLY President was Pastor Jason Holt, youth pastor in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He replaces Bob Halvorson, youth director at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota, who served two

terms as president. The next FLY Convention is tentatively planned for July 19 to 23, 2003, once again in Estes Park.

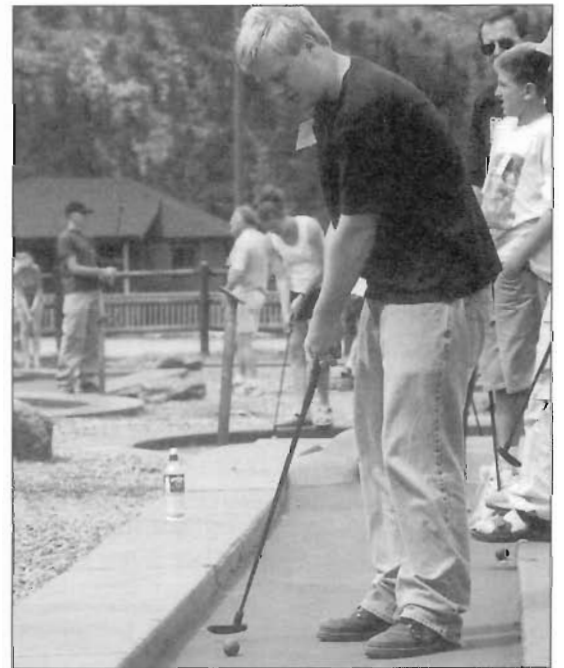
Many students and adults left Estes Park with a renewed commitment to walk with Jesus. Some spoke, however, of having said similar things before. As one said, "I've been talking instead of walking." This time many had a determination to have more than an emotional, mountain-top type of experience. They wanted transformed lives. For that to happen they knew there was only one answer and one hope: only Jesus.



Pictured are Wade Mobley, 1st vice president and Bob Halvorson, president. Both men concluded years of service on the FLY Board, now known as the FLY Committee. Pastor Jason Holt is the new president. Other election results are: Dan Keinanan, 1st vice president; Cory Buck, 2nd vice president; Andrea Valdez, secretary; and Ben Deubner, devotional life secretary.



Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, (center) LaCrosse, Wisconsin, served as the recreation coordinator.



Aaron Knutson, Valley City, North Dakota, enjoyed the popular mini-golf course.



Julie and Vicki Albrecht, Ashton, Illinois.

Convention profiles

Steve Stull, Ottawa, Illinois

They may call him “Grandpa,” but Steve Stull doesn’t care. He and his wife, Phyllis, are members of the junior and senior youth Bible study group at Faith Lutheran in Ottawa, Illinois, where they have learned that “you don’t have to bring anything to the table but love.” According to Steve, “Kids have such a trust level. They share and I share back. Guess what, I had the same struggles.”

Six years ago a group of teens returned from the Estes Park FLY convention to their home church in Ottawa. They wanted to keep meeting together weekly and named their group, “L.I.F.E.” which stands for “Living In Faith Everyday.” Pastor Gary Jorgenson was their pastor at the time and the youth gathered to study God’s Word in the basement of the Jorgenson home. That’s when Pastor Jorgenson invited Steve and Phyllis to join L.I.F.E.

“I remember the first time we walked into that basement. Two years earlier we had joined Faith Lutheran. Before that, I was a Methodist and was heavily involved in our conference committees, etc. I was burned out and told Pastor Gary to please don’t ask me to serve. But this request was different. That night when Phyllis and I walked into that basement, the kids were reading aloud from the Bible. They kept on with their study and it seemed to make no difference that we had joined them. On our way home, we knew something special had



Steve Stull

happened. We were hooked.”

L.I.F.E. still meets weekly. Now they have a room at church they have claimed. It has an access door to the altar and sometimes they end up on their knees in prayer. Steve recalled, “One night just one boy showed up. He still wanted to study the Bible with us. That meant a lot. I don’t try to high-five the kids, but just be there and love them.”

Faith Lutheran Luther League is another part of the congregation’s life. On Sunday mornings, the high school Bible class usually has 10 to 12 kids participating. “We all work together,” Steve added. This year the church sent 17 youth and four adults to drive the vans.

It’s the second trip to Estes Park for Steve who came without his wife this time as she stayed home awaiting a grandchild’s arrival. Steve is a plant manager for a Christian-owned business that gives company time for its employees to work in ministry. “I don’t have to take vacation time to come here this week,” Steve said, “But this is as important to me as any vacation. In fact, it’s more rewarding. I thank God for the beautiful relationship my wife and I enjoy with these kids. It’s the kind that only the Holy Spirit could produce.”



Justin Kindle, Metropolis, Illinois

Four years ago Justin’s mom was Brent Logeman’s boss and he invited her family to visit Faith Lutheran. She did and now her 15-year-old son, Justin, is the youngest member of the congregation’s worship team. Brent Logeman left his job to attend the Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis and is now the part-time pastor of his home congregation while attending school.

The Free Lutheran Youth Convention this past July was the first time the Metropolis congregation has sent youth to the convention. Eleven youth and five adults drove out from their southern Illinois community. For Justin, it was the first time to see the majestic mountains.

The Lord had something else in store for him to experience for the first time. At the end of the first evening’s service, Missionary Todd Schierkolk invited those who wanted to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior, to



David Borg, Cokato, Minnesota, Pastor John and Nanette Kent, El Cajon, California, and Pastor Christian Andrews, Palmdale, California.

Jason Norlien, Amery, Wisconsin

A well-organized convention for 1,525 people requires untold hours of planning and administration. One of the key positions in the hard working Free Lutheran Youth convention team is that of the registrar. The FLY Committee appointed Jason Norlien, the youth worker at Amery Free Lutheran Church, to fill that position for the 2001 Convention.

Plans for this summer's convention began two years ago immedi-

ately after the 1999 national youth gathering. Free Lutheran Youth President Bob Halvorson set up the contract with the Colorado facility. Early last winter, estimated numbers were given to the YMCA of the Rockies at Estes Park and John Miller of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran wrote the computer program for housing arrangements. As registrar, Jason set up the procedures and by February 2001, people began sending in their registrations via the mail or online.



Jason Norlien



Some of the FLY convention office staff, (L. to R.): Tara Hill, Kelly Nelson, Karen Palmer, and Pastor Brian Davidson, all from the AFLC headquarters and schools; and Kevin White, DeKalb, Illinois.

According to Jason, "I didn't work directly with the data entry. That was the huge job for Tara Hill, the part-time secretary for the youth office and receptionist at the headquarters building. During the last three months Tara was incredible —

working full-time for the convention while busy with the phones at headquarters."

Jason attended many of the FLY Committee meetings and appreciated seeing the single purpose of the convention permeate all the planning. "Their meetings opened with devotions and their clear desire was to see kids' lives impacted for Christ. Everything planned focused on the purpose to meet Jesus. That's why the theme, "Only Jesus" was very fitting." Seeing lives changed for Jesus and being a part of that brings tremendous joy to Jason.

During the convention week, Jason was responsible for the day-to-day coordination with the YMCA staff for the meals and accommodations. He had 10 people helping with the registration tables as 979 students arrived along with 478 counselors, staff and other adults, plus 68 children under age 12. The total registration of 1,525 is four more than the 1999 convention.

come forward. A friend stood by Justin, leaned over and whispered, "I want to go up, but I'm scared of what people will think."

Justin responded, "I was scared too, when I first accepted Christ, but it really doesn't matter what people think; it's what God thinks."



Justin experienced the thrill of helping his friend come to peace with God that evening. "Just seeing the

power of God at work ... I never thought I'd have that opportunity. But Jeremiah 29:11 is true." "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope."



The work behind the worship

“The worship was incredible.” “Praising God with 1,500 people was awesome.” Those types of comments are often heard as people share about their experience at FLY 2001. But how does it come together? Do a bunch of musicians just get up on stage that first night and start playing some of their favorite songs?

No, not at all. Much preparation and work goes into leading the worship at the FLY convention. Preparation starts about a year before. Songs are picked out for the CD that is recorded. The CD includes 15 songs and 160 hours are spent in a studio to produce it. During that year of preparation much thought goes into which songs will be part of the worship times. Songs are tried out at different venues such as retreats and youth gatherings. A list of songs that will be part of the convention music is then prepared four months before the convention and submitted to the FLY leadership and AFLC Youth Board for their approval.

The songs that are selected are ones that “exalt Christ, are Word-based worship, and have lyrics that express and display truths of God’s Word,” according to one of the lead worshippers, Jeremy Erickson. They also look for different styles of music and songs that cover a spectrum of worship. “We focus on music that is doctrinally sound with a focus on the cross,” says Joshua Skogerboe, another one of the lead worshippers. “We also focus on a blend of styles in music. We

feel it is important to continue to use hymns — that is part of our heritage — as well as new worship resources. It’s been exciting to see the way people respond to worship and to have kids asking for hymns, such as one kid who recently asked us to do ‘Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing’ again.”

The core of the worship music for the convention consists of 40 songs. They cover the spectrum from hymns to ballads or anthems to cultural or folk to contemporary; some are considered slow, some medium, some fast. Musicians are selected and approved by the FLY board before the convention as well. The core of

the worship team comes from the Twin Cities area which makes rehearsal times before the convention possible, although it is a challenge to find times that coordinate with the schedules of the 13 different musicians.

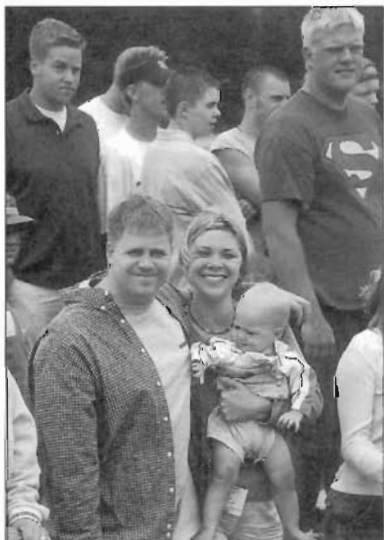
The worship team is called “lead worshippers” rather than “worship leaders.” This reflects the view that their primary responsibility is not to lead but to worship. “They are gifted musicians,” says Skogerboe, “and also well trained in their understanding of their calling as lead worshippers. It’s important that people know how highly we value prayer and a biblical understanding of worship leading. We don’t just choose good musicians. We want ones who study and pray and have their ministry calling clear.”

The goals of the worship team, according to Skogerboe, are to “model freedom in worship, worship that is sold out for Jesus,” and to “introduce new music and expressions of worship to the AFLC.” They also have the goal, states Erickson, to “teach that worship is first and foremost a heart issue. It’s about communion with God and not just the presentation of music. We try to teach that during the week.

“Early in the week some kids are distracted by the presentation. They’re distracted by the full band. It’s different than what they have in their home church. But when they become acclimated to the band it becomes a tool for facilitating worship. We really want kids to understand, though, that they don’t need a full band in their home church to worship in spirit and in truth.”

The technical aspect of the worship services involves three paid technicians and some 20 volunteers, along with much sound, lighting and projection equipment that is rented. “It is a challenge to work out all the logistics and coordinate all the information for all who are involved in the service,” says Skogerboe. The goal is to have the lead worshippers, the speaker, the drama ministry and all of the technicians working together to help give the service a clear focus. “We couldn’t do it without the Holy Spirit.”

“God is at work raising up worshippers,” states Skogerboe. “It’s exciting to see a movement of the Spirit in profound ways. Form and style issues are becoming less important and the heart motivation more important.”



Joshua and Amy Skogerboe and Isaac (center).



Student reflections

—Nicole Rugroden, Hannah Vesledahl, and Crystal Black
St. Paul's Lutheran
Fargo, North Dakota

What did you like about FLY and what did you learn?

We enjoyed the workshop on personal evangelism. We learned about leading friends to Christ and how to share with others without getting into an argument.

The music was upbeat. I really liked it.

We went to the workshop on listening to music and how to use your mind to figure out which kind to listen to.

What are things like back home?

The influence of non-Christian friends can be tough. They think you're just some goody-goody.

—Greg Hoover
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

What has meant the most to you here at FLY?

Pastor Kevin Garner really spoke the truth the other night and moved hearts. I believe a lot of people had big changes and turnarounds. I liked the way he used facts and statistics.

The worship also has been really incredible. It gets you focused.

What are some of the challenges you face back home?

Peer pressure from other Christians can bring you down. They'll say, "We're going out; why don't you?"

Also other times I've gotten fired up, but



More families than ever, attended the 2001 Convention. Pictured is the Dwight and Pat Bowman family and his mother, Gertrude Bowman from Helmar, Illinois.

—Pastor Craig Johnson



What do you think is going to change now after FLY?

This was the first time at FLY and it was amazing. Before we didn't do devotions much, but now after being here with the counselors and using some devotional books we're going to be doing devotions more.

this time I have a sincere desire to stay strong, to dig into the Word and listen to what Christ wants me to do.

How has God worked in your life in the past?

I've been a Christian since the 8th grade. The youth leader at our church really accepted me and welcomed me into the group.

What do you think adults can do for youth?

Encourage youth to come to things like this. It can be life-changing if you want it to be. And then it's like that verse in Timothy (I Timothy 4:12), "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." See youth as fellow believers and not just as youth.



Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran in Lakeville, Minnesota, had several families attending the convention. Their group took an afternoon rafting trip. Whitewater rafting is done at personal expense with parental permission and is not a part of the YMCA program.



Pastor Tom and Linda Schierkolk family of Eben Junction, Michigan and Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk family of Jerez, Mexico shared meal times together. Pastor Todd Schierkolk was the opening night speaker for this year's convention.

Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk, Jerez, Mexico, arrived at the FLY Convention in Estes Park in July believing it to be a watershed time for their family. They had returned to Mexico to begin their second term last winter. They lived with Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles in Jerez for six weeks while they found a house and moved their belongings from Aguascalientes.

They moved into their home just in time to host a high school team from Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy in Plymouth, Minnesota. The team left Jerez having made many good contacts for the missionaries to follow up with calls.

The Lenten season brought with it a new midweek service and ministry to the many retired Americans who live in Jerez. After Easter the

Lutherans For Life oppose destruction of embryonic children

National Lutherans For Life is opposed to embryonic stem cell research. We oppose it for three reasons.

First and foremost, we oppose embryonic stem cell research because it necessarily involves the intentional destruction of a human life. It is a biological fact that human life begins at conception. It is a scriptural fact that human life is a gift from God. In order to obtain embryonic stem cells, an embryonic child, a human life, a gift from God must be destroyed. All other arguments are subservient to this one. To get caught up in arguing about where this embryonic child is or how this embryonic child came to be or whether he is human or whether he is alive is to fall prey to worldly arguments and, in doing so, challenge the wisdom of God.

Through the Apostle Paul, God reminds us: "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. That is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, express-

ing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

The Christian is to value life as a gift from God. To think that the process involved in the beginning of a new life somehow makes that life less of a gift is foolishness. Even if there is great evil involved in the beginning of new life such as in rape, life is a gift. Even if the beginning of life is the result of scientific manipulation in a petri dish, life is a gift. Even if life is suspended in its development in a frozen state, life is a gift.

It is important to note here that the arms of God's grace are open to Christians who have been involved in the in vitro fertilization process and are now struggling with the reality of having embryonic children in frozen storage or feeling guilt because of a decision to have them destroyed. In Christ, God forgives and offers consolation and hope. Plus, there are now agencies that help couples adopt such embryonic children. Death is not the only choice.

The bottom line for the Christian is to trust in the wisdom of God that all life is a gift from Him. The Christian is called to defend life at

all stages of development and in all conditions because it is a gift from God. No other arguments are necessary. Nevertheless, because some Christians are being swayed by other arguments and myths surrounding embryonic stem cell research, we offer two other reasons why we stand in opposition.

Lutherans For Life also opposes embryonic stem cell research because we are not to follow the utilitarian philosophy that says, "Let us do evil that good may result" (Romans 3:8). The main argument of those supporting this research is that there is so much potential for curing disease and alleviating suffering. Typical is this statement by Congressman Greg Ganske from Iowa. "The potential this research has to cure disease and alleviate human suffering leads me to believe that this is a 'pro-life' position." (*Des Moines Register*, Wednesday, July 11, 2001, page 9A.)

Hand-in-hand with this argument is the idea that since most of the embryos are obtained from "left-over" embryos in in vitro fertilization clinics, they are going to be

group continued with a regular Sunday morning worship service as well as their midweek study in English. The mid-week Spanish study moved into the Schierkolk home where Debbie Giles leads a study for women while Todd leads a kid's club in the garage.

By the time they left for the Colorado convention, the Schierkolks were finally settled into their home and ministry. "While we look forward to pressing forward in Jerez," Barb added, "We are so thankful for the good reports of the growing congregation in Aguascalientes. Pastor Ricardo and the Spring of Living Water Lutheran Church are reaching out to win the lost and the people are growing in the Lord."

Dr. Bob Kohl, Brookings, South Dakota, was elected to the AFLC World Missions Committee upon the return of absentee ballots from members of the missions corporation. Dr. Kohl fills the position previously held by Mr. Kermit Berge of Larimore, North Dakota.

AFLC's "Fishing in the 21st Century" program awarded AALU grant

Before hooking a fish, an angler must have the right equipment, the line set at the right depth and the right bait at the end of the line to get a bite.

It is similar in fishing for people

for Jesus. The right tools are needed. Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) seeks to equip AFLC leaders with the evangelism tools they need by supporting the Fishing in the 21st Century program with a \$11,250 Churchwide Grant. Grant funds will be used to conduct a series of one-day workshops to train church leaders on methods of becoming more involved in evangelism.

"We will bring in teachers who are trained in the 'whys' and 'how tos' of the specific evangelism tools we have chosen," said Rev. Jim Rasmussen, project director for Fishing in the 21st Century. "We believe many of our congregations desire to reach the lost, but do not know how to start."

destroyed anyway. Why not put them to good use? This argument once again veils the fact that we are dealing with human life. We do not use this argument when talking about other human life. We do not say, "Well, she's on death row and is going to die anyway. Why not harvest her organs so that others may live?" "This child has cancer and is going to die anyway. Before he dies, why not use his organs and body parts for research so other children might have a better chance."

Mark Pickup has multiple sclerosis. In a speech to the National Right-to-Life Convention in June of 2001, he stated that if he chose to treat his disease with embryonic stem cells he would do so at the expense of his humanity. "I would rather stay the way I am," he concluded. It is at the expense of our

humanity and our faith that we accept this argument that it is okay to kill human beings in order to relieve human suffering. Christians are called to live a life of faith, faith in the goodness of God revealed in the cross of His Son, not in the absence of suffering. Faith does not seek suffering but neither does it seek to escape suffering by participating in something contrary to the will of God.

Thirdly, Lutherans For Life opposes embryonic stem cell research because there are other sources of stem cells that do not involve the destruction of life. We are not opposed to stem cell research nor do we desire to dampen the potential benefits. It is embryonic stem cell research that we oppose because it involves the killing of a developing human being. There is much promising research being done with stem cells from umbilical cord blood and adult stem cells from various sources.

The media is ignoring much of this alternate research. For example, Wesley J. Smith, author of "Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America" has written an article entitled "Politics Trumps Science: Political obfuscation and stem cells" in which he gives many examples of this alternate research

and the media bias. The complete article can be found at National Review Online: <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-smith070901.shtml>.

Embryonic stem cell research is an important issue, and it should raise concern among Christians. At its root is the idea that certain human beings are disposable at the discretion of others, an idea already too prevalent in our society. It is an idea that the Church must challenge and change.

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

Lutherans For Life challenges Christians to take Jesus' words seriously. We challenge Christians to act upon them. Contact Lutherans For Life for more information and to find out what can be done to defend life and proclaim the Lord of Life.

Lutherans For Life

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"Faith does not seek suffering but neither does it seek to escape suffering by participating in something contrary to the will of God."



An AFLBS summer ministry team shares

Pictured is the 2001 Cornerstone Team (kneeling L. to R.): Eric Folsland — a graduating senior from Oldham, South Dakota, with plans to attend college in the fall; Niklaus Forstbauer — from Chilliwack, British Columbia, who plans to return to AFLBS in the fall; Becky Rudebusch — from Lakeville, Minnesota, will return to AFLBS in



the fall; Lisa Baxter — from Arlington, Washington, will be a senior at AFLBS; and Liga Plaveniece — a graduating AFLBS senior from Riga, Latvia, will be one of 10 members of the Ministry Training Institute class at AFLBS this fall.

When we accepted this mission, we signed on for a 12-week commitment which began with a training week after Memorial Day at the AFLBS campus for all seven teams. Our team chose the following as our mission statement for the summer: "How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to

them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news'" (Romans 10:14-15, NIV).

We have traveled throughout the Midwest teaching vacation Bible school, participating in camps, and ministering in various capacities. We are trained in puppetry, teaching, leading, and singing. This summer our ministry reached as far as Estes Park, Colorado, to Osceola,

Wisconsin and Lake Bronson, Minnesota. We even made a guest puppet appearance during an Ambassador concert in Deshler, Nebraska.

This summer provided many unforgettable memories for us that have left footprints on our hearts and have forever changed our lives.

Lisa Baxter reflected, "We are no longer five separate people. We are a team. God called each of us with our different personalities, backgrounds and nationalities to be one in mind and purpose. He has given us the strength to overlook our differences and focus on the mission."

"The only word I can think of to describe our summer is 'crazy.' That's what it has been," said Liga Plaveniece. "A craziness that comes from standing on the edge, knowing that I have to jump in faith. And each time God is there to prove His faithfulness."

No matter the situation the hand of God guided us, His Spirit filled us and His angels protected us. Trials and blessings carved lessons into our hearts while laughter and fun fill our memories. It seemed as though we found a new Rudebusch (or someone related to them) in every town along the way. There were those wood ticks, spiders, water fights and even black bears that have changed the way we think of camps. Through it all God has been faithful and we thank Him for this incredible opportunity to serve Him.



Seminary and Bible School Receive Matching Funds

The Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis recently received \$4,747 from Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Matching gift program. This amount matches 52 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the second quarter of 2001. During the same quarter, 61 matching gifts to AFLBS brought a \$5,530 check from the matching gift program. Since beginning in 1979, Lutheran Brotherhood has given the seminary and Bible school \$152,681 and \$178,286 respectively.

Aid Association for Lutheran's Gift-Matching program matched \$1,800 that members gave to the Free Lutheran Seminary during the first quarter of 2001. Annual gifts of \$25 to \$100 made by AAL members to participating Lutheran schools are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL. This is an ongoing program that is open to all AAL members.

Kevin Subbert, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and a 2001 AFLBS graduate has joined Eric Rasmussen's food service staff as a cook at the Bible school.

Laurie Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota has joined the AFLC Schools' staff as the seminary secretary. She is the wife of Home Missions Director Paul Nash. She replaces Michele Mobley who will now serve full-time as director of student support for the Bible school. Laurie will work three-quarter time and the other fourth will be filled by Larry Walker, the administrative assistant for the home missions department. This is the first time since FLTS opened its doors in 1964 that the school will have full-time secretarial service.



Lucas Anderson, Ona Brandt, Erika Jensen and Caleb Berge.

Ambassadors in the park

Pictured are four members of the 2001 Ambassadors team from AFLBS, sharing in song in Stanley, North Dakota. Last July 4 they held an open-air concert in the city park in Stanley. Though the concert was the result of a last-minute opening in the team's schedule, and the opportunity for advertising was minimal, the pavilion they sang under was packed with listeners. Other people brought their lawn chairs and sat outside the pavilion. One of the means to promote the concert was the use of half-sheet flyers that were distributed during the city's Fourth of July parade held the morning of the concert. Flyers were handed out to parade onlookers or placed under windshield wipers of cars parked just off the parade route.

Seminarian Wade Mobley, is the new men's residence head for AFLBS. He and his wife, Michele, have moved into the apartment in the men's dorm vacated by Dana Coyle and his family who have moved to Lake Stevens, Washington for his year of seminary internship at Elim Lutheran Church.

Seminary classes start — The seminary has 24 students planning to be in attendance when the new school year begins on September 5. The first-year class will include 12 full-time students. The second-year class consists of eight students while four are in their third year. Two more international students may still possibly attend if the necessary arrangements can be made. Five international students have given up hope of attending the school this year and are praying for the doors to open up for them next year.

Two Lutheran church groups elect new presidents

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

Rev. Joel Egge was elected president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America (CLBA) at the church denomination's Centennial Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Friday, August 3, 2001. The CLBA is headquartered in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Egge succeeds Rev. Robert Overgaard, Sr., who is retiring after fifteen years in office. Egge was installed as president Saturday, August 4, during a Centennial Worship at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Joel Egge is a native of Mayville, North Dakota, and a graduate of Minot (North Dakota) State University and Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He has served as a parish pastor in

congregations in Washington, California, and New York. Most recently, Egge served as President of Lutheran Brethren Schools in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Egge understands the role of CLBA president to be that of *presiding pastor*, that is, one who attends to both the organizational and spiritual health of the church. Egge said, "I believe the most significant work of the church is done at the point of contact with people. Thus, church administrative work is significant to the degree that it encourages, enables, enhances, and employs God's people in touching others in Jesus' Name." The new president will transition from Lutheran Brethren Schools to the CLBA position over the next few months.

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

The Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick was elected to a three-year term as president of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod at their 61st annual convention on July 15, 2001 in St. Louis. Currently serving as president of the LC—MS Texas District, Dr. Kieschnick received 50.8 percent of the votes on the fourth ballot in a closely contested race that reflected divisions within the synod. The "moderates" campaigned for Kieschnick, but any sense of victory was overshadowed by the election of the "conservative" candidate, the Rev. Daniel Preus, director of the Concordia Historical Institute, as first vice-president. That full-time position was won by Rev. Preus by a 51 percent vote, also on the fourth ballot.

The March 23 death of President A.L. Barry, who planned to run for a fourth term, created new interest in an election whose result had been considered a foregone conclusion. Rev. Robert Kuhn, first vice-president, who headed the synod since Barry's death, spoke critically to the convention of "moderate" movements, accusing them of attempting to advance an old liberal theology and practice. Leaders of the movements were saddened by the

charges, declaring that they are loyal LC—MS Lutherans who are raising their voices to protest a system that is working in unhealthy ways, encouraging an "agree or be castigated" climate.

Some key issues that continue to divide the synod are communion practices, congregational autonomy, traditional versus contemporary worship styles, and the role of women in the church.

In other actions, the LC—MS declared fellowship with Lutherans in Latvia, Lithuania, Naiti, and Sri Lanka. Relating to the mission emphasis that was evident throughout the convention, Dr. Kieschnick stated that his first priority for the synod was fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Ambassador staff change

After 22 years of service, Solveig Hjermsstad is stepping down as assistant editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, with plans to enter into public school teaching. Ruth Gunderson has been hired as the new assistant editor. She can be reached at 763-545-5631 or e-mail ruthg@aflc.org

2001 Bible camps thrive

Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin hosted its 21st Annual Family Camp, July 29 to August 4. The temperatures were record high and the attendance was at an all-time high of 536. It was reminiscent of Lake Geneva Bible Camp near Alexandria, Minnesota, which in the 1960s served around 600 AFLC family campers. New program additions this year included a "Walk Through the Bible" representative teaching kids the Old Testament. A Lutheran Brotherhood grant facilitated that opportunity.

Already all but six rooms have been reserved for the 2002 ARC Family Camp! Campground facilities are still available. Earlier this summer, the ARC acquired a five-bedroom house from a local bank for the cost of moving it to their campgrounds. It is expected to accommodate small groups of 20 to 30 people and will be a year-around facility. Initial plans are to schedule a week-end retreat before next year's camp.

Bible camps throughout the AFLC are thriving. In spite of being scheduled immediately following the youth convention in Estes Park, 91 youth joined with the adults at Wisconsin's Lake Geneva Bible Camp for the Illinois District Family Camp. Pickeral Lake Bible Camp in South Dakota also held their camp during that week following the convention but maintained a good attendance of 120 youth. The Dakota Hills Camp west of Williston, North Dakota had about 120 participate in their district's family camp. Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota sponsors their own family camp for two weeks and had about 140 each week. The AFLC Wilderness Family Camp near Lake Park, Minnesota also had about that same number attending. The only camp known to be significantly affected by the Colorado convention this summer was the South Central District Family Camp in Anadarko, Oklahoma. Their five-year-old camp was cancelled this summer because of the efforts made to attend the Estes Park convention.

Lay pastor Jim Christenson, Shevlin, Minnesota, was approved as a licensed lay pastor at the July AFLC Coordinating Committee meeting. He began serving Landstad, Sell Lake and Trinity Free Lutheran Parish in November 2000 as an interim pastor and on June 1, 2001 accepted the call to be the full-time pastor of the Shevlin parish. He and his wife Sharon have four children ages 23 to 7. He expects to be installed later in September.

Pastor Alvin Magnuson, formerly of Reva, South Dakota, is retired and living at 2306 Prospect Ave. S.E., Aberdeen, SD 57401; phone number is 605-225-5560.

Medicine Lake Lutheran, Plymouth, Minnesota, hosted the ordination service on August 12, 2001 for Rev. Peter Ward. The recent seminary graduate is moving with his family to Vernon, British Columbia where he begins his new ministry as pastor of Living Word Lutheran Church. Medicine Lake Lutheran also broke ground in July in nearby Maple Grove for their new facility and school. The congregation voted to rename their congregation Grace Free Lutheran Church and the Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy will be called Heritage Christian Academy.

Aaron Johnson update

Our son Aaron is now 10 and a half. He continues to be in remission. Tests performed on him show no sign of leukemia cells in his blood, spinal fluid, or bone marrow. He is as active as any 10-year-old. This summer he has been involved in a number of vacation Bible school programs, attended camp, and played midgets softball.

Aaron has approximately one and a half years more of treatment.

We thank God for His many answers to our prayers and for the peace and strength He has given us through this ordeal. We're thankful for an excellent medical team, and we're thankful for the multitude of AFLC people across this nation who continue to keep us in their prayers. —Pastor Rodney and Candice Johnson Stanley, North Dakota

Women's Missionary Federation In Memory of...

Jeanette Ness, Morris, IL
Sheldon Mortrud, Fargo, ND
Mylo Sorensen, Valley City, ND
Selmer Kjelland, Valley City, ND
Clara Stenseth, Minneapolis, MN
Carrie Nelson, Glenburn, ND
Clara Johnson, Minot, ND
Edna Folden, Minot, ND
Elvera Sundhagen, Tioga, ND

AFLC Memorial Gifts June-July, 2001

Department given to
In Memory of...

Vision 2004

Delores Haugen
Maude Johnson
Edgar Anderson
Clinton Gjevre
Grace Erickson
Clarence Widner
In honor of
Ernie and Darlene Miedema's
50th wedding anniversary

AFLBS

Lee Quanbeck
Sheldon Mortrud
Grace Erickson
Elvera Sundhagen
Art Olson
Al Kveen
Anna Crawford
Bud Nyhus
Gladys Wittmer
Elaine Lundby

AFLTS

Katie Kraenzel
Paul Derrick
Sheldon Mortrud
Art Olson

Home Missions

Dorothy Kurtz
Carol Strande
Laura Diede
Duane Lee
Sheldon Mortrud
Art Olson

World Missions

Lloyd Roed
Clara Stenseth
Iva Boettcher

Evangelism

Francis Johnson

General Fund

Clinton Gjevre
Irene Hass Legacy

What youth need to hear

Some things you can always count on as topics of discussion at youth conventions. At least one or more teachers will talk about sex and one or more will talk about drugs and alcohol.

Those issues need to be addressed. The world is feeding young people a pack of lies and throwing major temptation their way. Students need to hear warnings, receive instruction and be pointed to the truth. That happened at the recent Free Lutheran Youth convention. Fortunately, that is not all that happened.

It can be tempting for congregations to give their youth a steady diet of what to avoid and what to do. That should be part of the instruction they receive, but if that is all they are being fed they are missing out on the main course. Young people need to hear the good news of Jesus.

We who have been in the church for many years and have often read the Bible and heard it preached, can easily make the erroneous assumption that other people know the things we know. We see a young person who comes from what appears to be a good Christian home, who has sat in a lot of Sunday school classes and worship services, and take for granted they know the basics of the gospel. We think they don't need to hear that again. Now they need instruction on what to do next. Or so we assume.

No one is born with an understanding of the gospel. The good news that God took on human flesh and died on the cross for our sins and rose again is something we need to be taught. It is far too incredible a truth for anyone to just think it up or figure it out on their own. It is so beyond the expectations of our human nature that it takes awhile for the truth to sink in. Even the ones who were with Jesus for three years had a difficult time grasping what He was teaching them. The night before the cross "Jesus' disciples said, 'Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.' 'You believe at last!' Jesus answered" (John 16:29-31, NIV).

Our young people need to hear time and again the good news of what Jesus has done. We should strive to be creative in how we share the truth, but we should

not think the good news has already been shared enough.

Some talk at times about taking students who have been in Sunday school, maybe have been confirmed, to the next level and get "deep" into God's Word. Often in those cases the mistake is made of defining deep as only the law and neglecting the gospel.

In Hebrews 5:11-13 the people are told, "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." The solid food he

wants to give them is more of the teaching he has been sharing in the earlier part of the chapter. He writes there of Jesus being our high priest, the sacrifice for sins, the One who "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:8, 9, NIV).

The solid food is Jesus. We "go deep" when we reflect on what the Word teaches about Christ and the good news of what He has done and what that means.

Stern warnings, frightening stories and inspirational pleas to do what is right can motivate youth for a time. But as author Philip Yancey writes,

"Coercion has never succeeded very well in remaking people." When students grow in their understanding of Christ's love, they become inspired to walk with Jesus and avoid paths that lead to destruction. "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died" (II Corinthians 5:14, NIV). It is Christ's love that will compel our young people to flee from the things that will destroy their lives. It is Christ's love that will motivate them to live lives that honor the Lord and impact others for Jesus. It is Christ's love that will encourage them to get into God's Word and follow what it says. Therefore, let us be sure to tell them over and over again about "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (I John 3:1, NIV).

—Pastor Craig Johnson

"Our young people need to hear time and again the good news of what Jesus has done."

SOMETHING TO SHARE

Fishers of men, trading our hooks for nets

Sometimes I think we have a famished view of evangelism (I speak here mainly for myself). We assume it's about certain phrases or certain prayers, and those divinely anointed moments one-on-one with someone who doesn't know Jesus. That's about it.

But it seems the Bible gives account of a wider calling for the children of God. As creatures created in His likeness, and souls being redeemed for His purposes, we are to display the glories of God.

How in the world are we to do that?

Sunsets and mountains stir in us, believers and unbelievers alike, a certain sense of awe that suggests our smallness and someone else's hugeness — a God who is unseen, who somehow reveals a glimpse of His character through the beauty and majesty of created things.

Aren't our lives, in Christ, to display these same glories? Shouldn't our lives, as God's children, do the same thing inside unbelievers as the glories we observe in creation?

But how do we do that?

Christ came to redeem a people. He bought us back from death and unto life by paying the price for our sins — let's pray this would ignite gratitude within us. Learning to be His through the passing of our days is what we call the Christian walk. And it is just that — a walk. Walks aren't always exciting. They're not always scenic. They're not always easy. They're just walks.

"Learning to be His through the passing of our days is what we call the Christian walk."

Sometimes walks take us to the mountains, and sometimes through the shadows of the valleys, the shadows which most often fall on the backside of mountains. What is most promising about a walk, and especially this Christian walk, is the anticipation of reaching our destination. That destination is one our Father has picked out for us — that of conforming to the likeness of His Son. It's a long walk, but it's one we don't walk alone. The One who set us on this road has promised not only to go with us, but to ensure our arrival as well.

This walk is to Him an opportunity to reveal His glories to the rest of creation through His prized possession — His people, you and me.

"... keep walking ... knowing that somewhere beneath the surface of our struggles, God Almighty is using our lives to draw men unto Him."

He does this in spite of our wanderings, and in spite of our limping along the way. And glory to God, our progress is to the world an act of evangelism to reach the hearts of the unsaved!

I went fishing on the Columbia River once, in the northwest part of Oregon. I didn't actually do the fishing, I just watched. The fishing was being done with a net, not poles. Instead of one little hook in the water, there was a mass of delicately tangled string waiting to catch a fish unaware. It was then I think I heard the Master's words for the first time: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Men fished in those days with nets, not poles. I think I get it now.

"Cast your life into the water of souls! Live with abandon in and for Me, and your life will win for me a catch you wouldn't even dream of asking for! I have plans of revealing my glory through you, and men will come to know Me through the life that you live! Now, follow me."

I'm done with poles. Hooks are for sport fishing. This isn't sport.

May this encourage us to keep walking and not quit, knowing that somewhere beneath the surface of our struggles, God Almighty is using our lives to draw men unto Him. We may not know our catch till the Master pulls us unto Him, and with us, all those whom He caught through the lives that we lived.

— *Jeremy Erickson*
Emmaus Free Lutheran
Bloomington, Minnesota