

THE LUTHERAN 

MARCH 2011

AMBASSADOR



OUR GREAT COMMISSION

{ THE CALL FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN }

The Lord my rock

BY PATRICIA BALLMANN

Not too far from our church is a park called Big Rocks, which hosts many large boulders nestled beside a quiet river. I've been thinking about those rocks recently and the significant role that rocks play in the pages of Scripture. In fact, the Bible declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is my Rock.

Contemplating the general characteristics of these massive rocks, we see the very same qualities in Christ. For instance, Christ is the One we can depend on, stand firm and build on, trust in, cling to, hide under, find shelter and protection in, and anchor to. However, apart from the obvious features of rocks like stability, refuge, shelter, and protection, there are some other qualities that only our Rock of Ages possesses.

One of these unique attributes of Christ my Rock is that He is the one I can be nourished and satisfied by. Rocks don't normally provide nourishment to a person. However, I Corinthians 10:4 says, "And [they] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." The Old Testament story of Moses and the children of Israel getting water out of a rock in the drought of the desert was a picture of Christ satisfying us. He alone possesses the living water that our souls need, and my Rock gives me that nourishment.

Another quality of the Lord my Rock is that He is the One I can cry to. Rocks on this earth are inanimate objects that no per-

son's cry can ever reach or affect. Not so with the Lord Jesus, who hears our every cry for help. Psalm 28:1a shows one such plea: "Unto you will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me." Of all the names of God David could have chosen to call upon, he picked the name of God as his Rock, where he could find refuge, protection, guidance, and compassion.

Finally, Christ is the Rock that begat us.

Rocks do not beget things here on earth, but Jesus Christ is a singular Rock, one that begets others. Deuteronomy 32:18 declares, "Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you." And Isaiah 51:1 reminds us that we are cut out of the same Rock: "Hearken to me, you who follow after righteousness, you that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence you are hewn." These passages serve to remind me that I am made in the image of my Savior. As a Christian, I am being sanctified and made to be more like my Savior through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Hallelujah! Christ is my Rock, and I am grateful for these unique characteristics of Christ that manifest His glory and mercy to me. As I Samuel 2:2 declares, "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

Ballmann is a member of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas.

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Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

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

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Evangelism that will introduce Jesus to this culture will flow from people who are deeply in love with Jesus.

—Reggie McNeal

Many of us equate evangelism with nervousness and artificial boldness. But when we look at how Jesus related to others, we see that he equated evangelism with love. He showed a natural interest in people by asking questions and paying attention, he wasn't frenzied or rushed, and he was approachable.

—Jim Henderson

The purpose of evangelism is not just to save people from dying without Christ, but to save them from living without him.

—George E. Sweazy

Churches that have lost their heart for evangelism are living out their final chapter.

—Anthony G. Pappas

Apart from an unrelenting commitment to an outward focus, churches inevitably are caught in the deadly undertow of the ABCs – attendance, building, and cash – and will find 100 reasons not to establish a strategy to make disciples.

—Glenn McDonald

EVANGEL - DRIVEN EVANGELISM

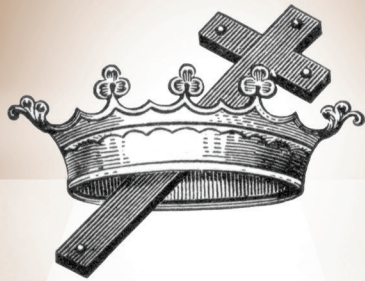
{ BY KURT HEIN }

The word “evangel” is derived from the Greek *euangelion* which is translated in our English Bible as “gospel.” It is the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior and that He died and rose again for you.

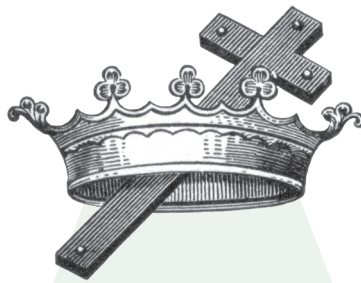
The Apostle Paul summarized the evangel in this way, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4, ESV).

Are you involved in evangelism, in disseminating the good news about Jesus? If so, ask yourself this question: In working to reach others with the evangel, have you let the evangel reach you?





LAW-DRIVEN EVANGELISM



The horrible truth is that billions of people currently suffer under the tremendous burden of sin and will be tormented for eternity in hell as judgment. Every second a person dies, doomed to hell. In the time it has taken you to read up to this point, 35 unbelievers have died. The loss of these people to hell is a needless tragedy. If only *you* had led them to Christ!

Is this why you evangelize? The motivation produced by this type of exhortation is counterproductive. If you seriously meditate on the above facts you will be crushed by their weight and the pressure will lead you to respond in at least one of three ways:

You will feel guilty.

How can you enjoy life when so many will burn in hell? This load of guilt will drive you to take every possible opportunity to share the gospel. Your conscience will hound you if any opportunity goes to waste. You will feel absolutely terrible when, in explaining the gospel, you make a mistake or are unable to adequately answer a question. Maybe they didn't receive Christ because you didn't share the gospel correctly. Maybe you didn't pray enough. Maybe you didn't say the right thing at the right time.

You will feel helpless.

With millions of people going to hell, how can you really make a difference? You've tried sharing the gospel before and it didn't work. You got rejected. It's no use trying. People are too in love with their sinful lifestyle to want to follow Jesus. You'll deal with the situation by ignoring the problem. Out of sight, out of mind.

You will feel proud.

Thank God you've realized that the world needs the gospel! How can Christians ignore the fact that most of the world is going to hell? If only they were as dedicated to evangelism as you are, the world could be converted to Christ. You're sure the Lord is pleased with you because of how hard you've worked to fulfill His Great Commission. You can't wait to meet Jesus in order to show Him how many people you've lead to Christ.

Perhaps you've experienced one or more of these three reactions. This is the result of being motivated by the law to evangelize. It doesn't work. The law is the declaration of God's moral standard. It points to what is true, right, and holy, but it is completely unable to give you what you need to reach its requirements. The law always leaves you guilty and lifeless. Or, if you deceive yourself into thinking you can actually follow the law, it leaves you proud and arrogant. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The law by itself does nothing but show you how you and others fail.

Evangelism motivated by law, then, is a contradiction. Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel. And the gospel is the good news of how God has freed us from the curse of the law through Christ. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13a). Christ, through dying on the cross, has taken our sin upon Himself and given us His righteousness. God forgives us, despite our sin, because of Christ.

How can we preach freedom from the law's curse unless we have experienced the gospel's freedom ourselves? If we want to

evangelize others, we must first evangelize our own hearts. When we preach the gospel while motivated by the law, we are being motivated by the very thing from which we are seeking to free others. It can only lead to three things: guilt, helplessness, and pride.

GOSPEL-DRIVEN EVANGELISM

True evangelism is motivated by love for God that bubbles up from faith in what Christ has done.

Christ forgave you of all your sins.

Christ has forgiven all your sin, including your lack of effort to evangelize. He forgives when you are too lazy or fearful to share the gospel. He forgives when you mess up and say the wrong thing. He forgives when you can't answer the questions correctly. You don't have to be motivated by guilt anymore. You are free to share with others the freedom that God has freely given you. You can joyfully, courageously, and energetically tell others how to experience the same forgiveness that Christ has given you on the cross. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Christ empowered you to believe through His Word.

When you heard the gospel for the first time, you were spiritually dead. You didn't make yourself become a Christian. God, through His Word, breathed life into your dead heart and gave you faith. If you were unable by your own power to believe in Jesus, then how can you make others believe? It is God through the power of His Word who grants life. His Word is powerful. You no longer have to feel helpless. You can share God's gospel message with full assurance that God will achieve His purpose. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Christ chose to use you.

God didn't choose to use you because of anything good in you. You were born a sinner and nothing good was in you. You are no better than anyone else. God doesn't need you at all. God chose you because of His grace. He has made you part of His plan to reach the world with the message of the gospel. He has given you a tremendous privilege that you did not earn. You now have the privilege of telling others about what Christ has done for you and about what He has done for them. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit ..." (John 15:16a).

Whereas the law brings death, the gospel brings life. If we first learn to evangelize our own hearts with the gospel, God will grant us the proper motivation for evangelizing others. When our evangelism is gospel-driven, it is filled with joy, courage and humility. Christ has forgiven us, empowered us, and chosen us. He has done all this despite us. He has done so because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. He has made us part of His Great Commission. He has made us part of what He is doing. Let's tell the world what God has done for us and what God has done for them! "And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39b).

Hein, a first-year student at the Free Lutheran Seminary from San Marcos, Texas, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

HANDS & FEET OF THE GOSPEL

{ AFLC CONGREGATIONS USE EVANGELISM GRANTS }



LAMPLIGHTER

Former NHL player highlights community event

We held an outreach lunch featuring the personal testimony of former NHL player John Stewart of Lamplighters International ...

Our goal was to have 150 people for a free lunch at the community room at the YMCA. We felt that the YMCA was a non-threatening place to invite people to hear Pastor Stewart. He gave a personal testimony of saving faith in Jesus Christ. There were about 35 people who heard Pastor Stewart's testimony at this event. It is our prayer and hope that these people were blessed and impacted by hearing his testimony.

Pastor Eric Rasmussen
Calvary Free Lutheran
Fergus Falls, Minn.

SERIOUS JUJU

Congregation partners with community ministry to skaters

On one occasion 14 skateboarders came forward to receive Christ as their personal Savior after one of the members here at Faith delivered his personal testimony. On another occasion, after one of Faith's members shared, it facilitated healthy conversations on how to deal with blended family issues. We have also been a part of getting Bibles into the hands of the skaters ... We have had many interactions with the skaters while we have been at the indoor skate park; we have established relationships with them. The skaters know that Faith Free Lutheran Church cares for them and welcomes them.

Dawn Triplett
Faith Free Lutheran
Kalispell, Mont.

WIDOWS/ORPHANS

Practical gifts open doors to women in need of help

The second focus of this grant is to help out our community's widows and single women who ... are living on a limited income. One of the evangelism committee members came up with the idea of utilizing our local service stations to also involve more community members in this project. Gift certificates for oil changes have been developed and approved by the businesses. The gift certificates will cover the cost of a basic oil change on a vehicle. This project will not be limited to Bethel, but will involve anyone in the community who would have this need.

Chloe Butler
Bethel Community Church
Culbertson, Mont.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

{ BY ROBIN WEINER }



It's March, and many of us are still being motivated, or even haunted, by our New Year's resolutions. While I can't deny those annual personal goals of being a better wife and mother, and spending more time in the Word, my only official resolution this year was to be "more available"—specifically to be less scheduled, and more responsive, to the opportunities God places before me each day. After praying for such opportunities in the last year, 23 individuals from our congregation were blessed to participate in a new ministry at Living Word in Sioux Falls, S.D., known as Food for the Soul.

In June 2010, our church council had the opportunity to apply for a grant through the AFLC Commission on Evangelism to fund a new evangelism ministry. Having spent the past several years working toward facility construction, our congregation hoped to reach outside the walls of our beautiful new building and minister to those with physical and spiritual needs in the under-served areas of Sioux Falls. This new ministry, with the support of the AFLC grant, recently completed its first season of scheduled visits, and we rejoice as we reflect on how the Lord has used Food for the Soul to impact our community, as well as our congregation.

Early last summer, the Food for the Soul team approached a community organization, seeking referrals for five families with current physical or financial needs. Each family was then assigned a delivery team of two or three congregation members, as well as a team of prayer warriors to intentionally pray over these families during their eight weekly summer visits. We felt that while the children were out of school, our delivery of groceries would have the biggest impact during the summer months. Several "professional shoppers" from the congregation also met throughout the eight weeks to manage the grocery shopping for these five families. Guided by the individual families' food preferences, families received \$50 worth of groceries on each of their eight visits. Our prayer was that during these eight weeks, teams would build relationships with these families and have opportunities to personally witness and share Christ with them.

For many of us, we couldn't deny a sense of anxiety at the thought of sharing Christ with a complete stranger. How convicting, when that is exactly what the Great Commission calls us to do (Matthew 28:16-20). As a kick-off to this ministry, we invited Pastor Jim Rasmussen, the AFLC's director of Evangelism, to join us for an evangelism training event on July 17. The morning was spent learning and developing the principles and techniques of introducing others to Christ. We learned that the most effective witnessing is always intentional and should be preceded and accompanied by prayer. What a blessing it was to be able to update our prayer warriors following each visit and to collectively lift up the prayer requests and needs of these families!

The experiences of our five teams have been as varied as the families we've visited. We have had the joy of witnessing to Caucasian, Native American and African American families; to a

family of 11 with parents working multiple jobs to make ends meet; to single mothers caring for young children; and to a young mother whose husband is currently serving overseas in the military. We have had teenagers ask about salvation in the context of the recent death of a friend, and have seen opportunities for men from our congregation to mentor other men to be the spiritual leaders in their families. We give thanks for these precious opportunities to be "ambassadors for Christ" (II Corinthians 5:20).

As a couple, my husband, Tom, and I have been truly blessed by the relationships we have developed with our Food for the Soul family. As we have prayed for the words to say prior to each visit and for opportunities to share Christ, we have come to more fully realize the true and overwhelming joy that comes with walking in

WE HAVE HAD THE JOY OF WITNESSING TO CAUCASIAN, NATIVE AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES; TO A FAMILY OF 11 WITH PARENTS WORKING MULTIPLE JOBS TO MAKE ENDS MEET; TO SINGLE MOTHERS CARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN; AND TO A YOUNG MOTHER WHOSE HUSBAND IS CURRENTLY SERVING OVERSEAS IN THE MILITARY.

God's will and being led by the Holy Spirit. As our congregation and prayer warriors have joined us in praying for receptive hearts, we have had the honor of walking into a family's home and witnessing those prayers being answered.

As summer drew to an end, it became apparent that several of these relationships were meant to continue far past these eight visits. In November and December, our congregation generously donated enough groceries to deliver Thanksgiving and Christmas meals, as well as Christmas gifts, to these families. Many of our teams have continued to minister to these families on a more individual basis, as well, delivering coats, hats and gloves as winter approached, meeting for coffee, or sharing a meal. As we reflect on our first season of Food for the Soul, we give thanks for the support of the AFLC, the constant support of our prayer warriors, and the gifts of our congregation, and we look forward with excitement to reaching out to an additional five families next summer.

In John 21:17, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." It is my prayer that as we look forward over the coming year, we would each personally strive to be more available to the Lord's call in our daily lives, and truly cherish these opportunities to feed His sheep.

Weiner is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Like 5:4 says, “When he (Jesus) had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.’”

Jesus made this statement shortly after He had spent a long time preaching the Word of God, much like a pastor of today who, after preaching a typical Sunday sermon, sees the need for the entire congregation to then proceed out to the “deep water” of our surrounding community with the good news of God’s Word.

One can picture the confines of our church building as the shallow water, where the risks for all of us are few. Most of us worship in a homogenous group where we don’t have to cross into deep water to reach someone. Most who are in attendance have already heard the message, so we feel safe in sharing our faith.

I just returned from the AFLC pastors’ conference where our theme was “Building Bridges.” Nearly every department of our AFLC challenged us pastors about the need to build bridges, whether it is a bridge to youth, home missions, or world missions, or outreaches to different cultures, seniors, or secular community leaders.

Our own congregation has experienced evidence of this need as we find ourselves part of an increasingly ethnically and ideologically diverse society. Our congregation is studying A.W. Knock’s *Personal Evangelism*. We have begun to see how vital personal outreach is to successful evangelism. We culminated our study with a weekend of prayer followed by a week of evangelistic meetings. It has become obvious that the days are passing away when evangelism consisted of simply scheduling an event, advertising, praying, and then expecting that many from outside the church would come. From casual observation, it seemed that most of those who were in attendance at our evangelistic outreach were already Christians. And in most cases they came because they have a relationship with someone in our congregation.

If we think about Jesus’ words from Matthew 28, waiting for people to come to us has never been God’s plan. The Lord told his apostles to *go*. Over the past several years, God has called us to go in directions that were surprising, and built bridges we personally had not crossed before. We began casting our nets into deeper water when we became involved in our town’s ministerial association and the local Kiwanis club. By building friendships with pastors and professionals from other denominations and trying to get past such labels as “evangelical” or “liberal,” we have gradually been able to build an atmosphere of trust. This trust, built upon mutual respect and Christian love, has resulted in increasing our congregation’s participation in the social and physical needs of the people in our

community while at the same time increasing evangelical concerns among the entire ministerial association. Together we provide food, finances, and clothing, but also run a Christian youth center and conduct two ecumenical services each year which truly aim at leading all to Christ and strengthening those who already know Him. We have focused on our commonality, which is Christ as the true means of salvation, rather than on our differences. In the end, Christ has been lifted up and glorified.

Our congregation has always had a mission to reach the youth in our community, which has opened many doors for evangelism to entire families. Besides our regular youth group, Sunday school, and vacation Bible school, something new and different is happening. Our church moved its Wednesday night Kids’ Bible Club to our youth center downtown where we are now reaching a segment of the community that would probably never cross the church’s threshold. This simple program, a weekly child evangelism meeting, draws more than 30 kids ages 6-15 from both church and unchurched, Hispanic and white, and both middle class and poor backgrounds.

Also exciting is the witness to those who have begun volunteering to help with this ministry. One of our church members wrote a letter to many prominent community leaders and organizations asking for financial and food donations, because we had begun serving healthy suppers to the children. When these different people have come in to serve the meal, some have stayed to hear the gospel presentation, made connections with some of the children, and made connections with one another. Some volunteers may not yet even be believers, but through this ministry that we conduct out in the deeper water of our community, the volunteers are being exposed to the gospel in a fresh, new way, even through the witness of young children, and bridges of trust are being built across traditional cultural barriers.

Finally, the Lord has led us into deeper water with Him as we have discovered that we are not only influencing others, but we, too, have been changed. We have experienced changes in our thoughts, attitudes and prejudices toward people who are from other denominations or other cultures. Too many times we have thought, “I can’t work with those people,” or, “I can’t relate to people of different ethnicities or backgrounds.” We are learning that He has given us all we need in His Word, and now He calls us to go and cast our nets in the deep water.

Carlson serves Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

A full-page photograph of a person standing on a long concrete pier extending into the ocean. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds. The water is calm, and a small lighthouse is visible on the horizon. The overall tone is contemplative and serene.

INTO DEEPER WATERS

{ BY PASTOR TIM CARLSON }

ENCOURAGING HEARTS FOR THE LOST

{ BY ANDREW OLSON }



A smile lit the face of a gas station cashier as I handed him back the candy bar I just purchased. "Is this for me?" he asked. "Yes, and Jesus Christ has shown an even greater love which is for you to receive."

Compared to the immensity of Jesus Christ's love for them, the Caramello bar was merely a trifle. Yet \$1.50 opened a door for me to share Romans 5:8 and a gospel tract with that cashier.

Evangelism is a ministry of invitation, it's one which says to the unbelieving soul, "Hey you there, entrust your soul to Jesus and come to heaven. He's shown us the way, let's follow Him together." God has chosen us to send invitations to the glorious wedding feast of the Lamb. The Christ-follower will be powerfully effective in spreading the kingdom of God through the channel of love for the lost. It doesn't take a theology degree to embody the deep love of our Savior.

As an AFLC, we declare and affirm that the Bible is the Word of God. Personally, does our interaction with the lost reflect that belief? Do we have an earnest love for those who have rejected the truth? The Word of Life in II Peter 2:9 declares that God knows how to punish the ungodly and save those whose hope is in Him "If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment." From a heart of love, it's the believer's cry: Be reconciled to God today through the cross of Christ and escape the coming judgment.

But we grow weary in this ministry of reconciliation. We need daily encouragement from the Lord through His Word and through believers to spur us on to do rightly. Seminarian Marcus Dahl has developed a ministry for this very purpose—the encouragement of Christian hearts toward evangelism. He's been commissioned by members of the AFLC Commission on Evangelism committee to collect stories from around the nation of how Christians share their faith so that believers might take heart and do likewise.

The idea was formed as Marcus—who has worked with and hosted biblical discussions on *The Pastor's Study* radio program for the past two years—and a colleague gathered in a radio studio considering the impact of on-air advertisement. Through the radio, a message could reach a multitude of listeners.

"How much would one minute of air time cost?" Marcus asked. "About \$50," was the reply.

As he considered the cost, Marcus wondered: What if the radio could be used to encourage Christians to be active in sharing their faith? What if minutes could be filled with encouraging stories of believers taking the initiative to share the gospel? Such testimonies would be powerful, but someone would need to collect them.

Marcus drafted a proposal to the Commission on Evangelism for such a ministry to be undertaken and hearty approval followed shortly. He was appointed to collect, record and distribute

"one-minute stories" through the Internet. The nature and quality of these recordings are such that they can be used on the radio, downloaded for personal use, or played in a church setting. A Web site for the operation, www.eternalmoments.org, was recently constructed and will facilitate the download of these stories. It's anticipated that 21 "sound bytes" will be available for download by May of this year, with an ever-expanding library to come. The purpose of this exciting new frontier is that many might be encouraged to share the message of the cross.

What we know about the unbeliever rightfully compels us to share with them a message from a heart of love.

Marcus comments, "Evangelism shouldn't be seen as a one-time event, rather a lifestyle in which a believer needs to daily be receiving encouragement to walk in. Methods and books don't cause

AS HE CONSIDERED THE COST, MARCUS WONDERED: WHAT IF THE RADIO COULD BE USED TO ENCOURAGE CHRISTIANS TO BE ACTIVE IN SHARING THEIR FAITH? WHAT IF MINUTES COULD BE FILLED WITH ENCOURAGING STORIES OF BELIEVERS TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL?

evangelism; it's not knowledge that causes this action."

Evangelism comes from the overflow of our love of Christ, a passion for God's glory and love for the lost who do not know personally the Son of God.

There is an appeal and an invitation that God wants to extend to the world through us. Marcus suggests that "the difference between the Christian and the evangelist is this: when the evangelist gets nervous about sharing his faith, he does it anyway."

May we be encouraged by the lives of others, that we might be reminded to clothe ourselves with Christ's love. We must be steadfast in our hope; the evil one seeks to incite fear, while the loving Christ beckons to us, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

It's my prayer that God will do a work in our hearts that no number of my pen-strokes could ever accomplish. If we are to have a heart deeply troubled for the lost, it will be God-wrought. If we are to set our mind on loving our enemies, it will be God-wrought. If we are to have lips which plead for the reconciliation of broken relationships with God, it will be God-wrought. If we are to have hands which reach out in servant love to the hurting and helpless, it will be God-wrought. Only He can do such a mighty work, and place this compassion within us. Let God's people pray that He would do this.

Olson, a senior at AFLBS, is a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.

ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

{ BY DEAN HOBELMANN }

Speak, Lord, for your servant hears,” said Samuel after he heard God’s third call (1 Samuel 3:9). After listening to pastors and missionaries speak, we know they frequently experience a similar call from God. It is exciting to hear when these things happen and how people respond to God’s call.

Why don’t all Christians hear and heed this call? Why do some respond positively and others ignore God’s call? Let us look at our role as laypeople in fulfilling the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Let’s also look at this in the light of Luke’s account of the Great Commission, “... and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things” (24:47-48). Jesus explained to His disciples how this would be achieved in verse 49, “Behold I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We can also receive this power, if and when we accept God’s call.

It is interesting to see how God uses people from the time of Samuel to the present time. When Jesus was on this earth He prepared and taught His disciples how to evangelize. Soon after Jesus’ death and resurrection, we read in Acts 2 how Peter, with the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to witness and bring thousands to know the gospel. He continued to do this despite much protest and also after being thrown into prison. The number of believers was increasing as Peter continued to witness, to the point that they were bringing in the sick off the streets. Acts continues to tell us how more and more believers were added through the ministries of Paul and his associates.

All of these examples have blessed us with a heritage of the Christian witness. We as laymen must realize the responsibility we have in teaching about repentance and forgiveness of sins right in our home communities (Luke 24:47).

We have looked at individuals who have specifically answered the Lord’s call. Is the Lord calling each and every one

of us? Are we disciples? Webster’s dictionary says a disciple is a follower. A Christian disciple would be a follower of Jesus. If every layperson in the church was a disciple, our churches would probably be full.

We are thankful that many are called and that many have answered by serving, especially as pastors and missionaries. Many are willing to give to missions. However, statistics indicate that most people in the Church who have recently come to know Jesus as their Savior came because a layperson invited or shared the gospel with them.

We need to understand why we have the Church. God uses congregations as a means for the work of evangelism to be carried out. The Church is similar to the body in that it is made up of many parts. Every part is necessary; the whole cannot function properly without each part functioning as it should. A healthy church is very similar to a healthy body; all members must be doing their part. Is this why so many church pews are empty on Sunday morning? We have many dedicated pastors and missionaries. Shouldn’t laypeople be dedicated, too?

Here are a few common excuses I’ve heard about why we choose not to evangelize: “We are not called,” or, “We do not have a gift for witnessing.” But 1 Corinthians 12:1-14 says that each one of us is given a gift for ministry, “... now there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit.” Each is given a gift—wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy—and the list goes on and on. Can we receive a gift we do not think we have? Scripture says, “Ask and it will be given to you” (Luke 11:9).

The Lord is directing and challenging His Church. We each are part of the Church. No one is excluded. We, as laypeople, are being called. Will we be like Samuel and answer: “Speak Lord, thy servant hears,” or will we act like the children of Israel, “for they hear Your words but do not practice them” (Ezekiel 33: 32b).

Scripture is clear. It is speaking to us now. Souls depend on our response to what we hear. The rewards are eternal.

Hobelmann, a member of Abiding Word Lutheran in Deshler, Neb., is a member of the AFLC’s Commission on Evangelism.



AFLC Schools host annual missions conference in January



TOP LEFT: Emmalee Hite, Amery, Wis., listens to Pastor Jonathan Abel preach in chapel.

TOP RIGHT: Pastor Joel Rolf, dean of AFLBS, prays for four MTI students commissioned at chapel.

BELOW LEFT: Pastor Jonathan Abel is assisted by Jeremiah Jones during a sermon illustration.

MIDDLE: Senior Mike Johnson listens during a chapel sermon.



RIGHT: Pastor Jonathan Abel, missionary to Brazil, was the featured speaker.



AFLC memorials: January

AFLBS

Pastor Lloyd Bjornlie
Vivian Wall (3)
Irvin Greb
Louise Jermeland
John and Jackie Nelson
Nelfred Borslien
Kenneth Hanson

Craig Smithberg

AFLTS

Gordon Hove
Terry Conat
Norma Hettervig
LaDonna Johnson
Loran Stortvoen
Pastor Stephen Odegard

General Fund

Alvin Bergstrom
Thelma Olson

World Missions

Norma Hettervig
Terry Conat
Olive Schmidt

Home Missions

Darrel Ford
Orin Wechsler

Parish Education

Vivian Wall
Terry Conat
Clayton Arneson



The Word in their hearts

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

The blue sky, the sun shining bright, and the soft roar of Itanda Falls on the Nile River in the background was the perfect setting for a graduation ceremony of the first class of the Ambassador Institute. The 20 students were sitting in the front row with caps and gowns. This was the first graduation they had ever been a part of. The shade under the trees was filled with family, friends, leaders of the community and guests who came from a distance. All of them watched with eager anticipation. Excitement beamed from their faces, tears filled their eyes. They had made it!

It was an accomplishment worth celebrating. These 20 men had been meeting weekly for two years. Every week meant walking or biking several miles to the mud-and-stick church where the Monday morning training had been held. Rain, sickness, and family problems were obstacles that every student had to face. Three- to four-hour weekly meetings were a sacrifice of time that could otherwise be used to provide for their families.

Their assignments were no less of a challenge. Each week they memorized a story of the Bible between 20 and 60 verses long. Every week they would retell that story five to ten times to their curious audiences back home. Every 14 weeks they took a final exam where they would recite from memory one of the stories of the previous term chosen at random.

They had been through this drill for two years and now, after memorizing 84 stories from the Bible, they were ready for graduation. No one can ever take away the 2,200 verses of the Bible that they have put into their memory. No one can measure the impact that God's Word has had on their lives, or the effect that it will have on their community for generations to come.

The students listened intently as their teacher, Pastor Nathan Jore, recited the entire story of Jonah and applied it to the students' own call to missions. They knew the story well; it was their assignment just a few weeks back near the end of the term. Today that message wasn't an assignment for class but a call from God to take what they had just learned and to reproduce it in another mud-and-stick church in their own community.

I shared with these graduates the call of Jeremiah from chapter one and the directive from the Lord to "go everywhere I send you and say whatever I command you" because it is the Lord's call, His Word, His presence and His authority behind everything that we do.

They got it. These two years of training were not about receiving a certificate; rather, they were a call from God to carry His Word to another mud-and-stick church and train another group of people. They do not need a classroom or a school building to study. They do not need a library of books to learn about the Lord. Everything that they need is in the text of the Word of God—and now it is in their hearts.

Itanda Falls was a perfect place to hold the first graduation. On this site the Nile River begins, and its flow carries life-giving water to even the most desolate desert places of Africa. So also, the training through the Ambassador Institute can carry the life-giving water of God's Word to places that do not even know the name of Jesus.

Olson leads the Ambassador Institute, a distance education program of AFLC World Missions.

Members of Newark Lutheran mark milestone at 125 years

Members of Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill., celebrated the congregation's 125th anniversary on Dec. 12, 2010.

Newark Lutheran was officially organized in 1885. Throughout its history the congregation has held to a high view of the authority of Scripture, which ultimately led to its withdrawal from the American Lutheran Church in 1988. The congregation has been affiliated with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations since 1997.

Our fellowship within the AFLC's Illinois District has been encouraging on several levels. We have had excellent pastoral leadership from AFLC President Robert Lee and his successor, Pastor Elden Nelson. In addition, we have been blessed by the presence of nine other AFLC congregations within 25 miles of Newark as well as wonderful pastors throughout the district. From 1999 through 2004, the Newark area AFLC congregations sponsored weeknight services at the high school gym during February. There has also been an ongoing Lenten pulpit exchange as well as the annual district mid-winter Bible conference. In 2008 the district formed a family Bible camp, held at Cedar Lake, Ind., and the camp has grown in attendance each year. The congregation has also experienced a steady growth in giving for missions during this period.

Since 2006, weekly sermons have been posted on the Internet as "podcasts" (play-on-demand). During the past year the average

number of listeners per week has been more than 250. In 2009 the congregation began partnering with Helmar Lutheran to broadcast on television station WSPY, each congregation alternating weeks. Videos of the congregation's worship have also been posted on Internet video sites such as YouTube, resulting in responses literally from around the world.

Surely the words of the hymn "Amazing Grace" apply to us and to this congregation: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come." We face great uncertainty with regard to the threats of terrorism and global economic upheaval. Greater still is the threat of growing unbelief and the rejection of the Word of God. May we continue to hold fast to the absolute authority of Scripture—and we must remain vigilant in the days ahead. May we put on anew the whole armor of God, proclaimed in Ephesians 6, that we be enabled to "stand firm in the evil day."

May we live in the knowledge that the greatest dangers threatening us are spiritual and eternal in consequence. May we heed the words of Jesus Himself: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Even as we give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, may those who come after us find us faithful.

~Submitted by Pastor Chuck Sampson

Association Retreat Center hosts upcoming events

A look at upcoming AFLC retreats and camps at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

• Women's Retreat

Dates: March 18-20

Cost: \$85

Theme: Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice

Speaker Jo Woodard, Brookings, S.D., will speak on "Enjoying God," "Attributes of a Godly Woman," "Margin," "Nice is not a Fruit of the Spirit," and "Empowered by God." A

silent auction will be held Saturday afternoon.

• Men's Retreat

Dates: April 15-16 (17)*

Cost: \$65

*Optional extra night stay for an additional fee.

For more information on these retreats and future camps, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877. You can also visit the ARC Web site at www.arc-aflc.org for more information.

People and Places

The theme for the **2011 Annual Conference** is "Generations Walking Together," taken from Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The conference will be held June 13-17 in Sioux Falls, S.D. Host congregations are Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran.

Larry Myhrer has been hired by the AFLC Schools as the business manager.

Pastor John Kiehl has accepted a call to serve Faith Lutheran, Metropolis, Ill. He has resigned from serving Christ Lutheran, Stover, Mo.

Members of the Coordinating Committee removed **Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran**, Seward, Neb., from the congregational roster at their request.

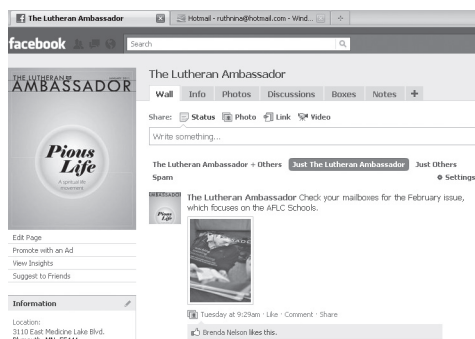
Don Bullene, Bloomington, Minn., has been appointed to the Benefits Board to fill the unexpired term of Roger Gamble, Seward, Neb., who has resigned from his position.

Three seminarians who will graduate this spring from the Association Free Lutheran Seminary in Plymouth, Minn., are available for call beginning March 1. They include **Jason Gudim**, **Ryan Mairs** and **David Franz**.

Lutheran Ambassador on Facebook

The editors of *The Lutheran Ambassador* recently started a fan page on Facebook for the monthly magazine of the AFLC, featuring posts of past articles and news from campus events.

Discussion topics will be posted on current issues within the AFLC and the Church at large. Also, we'd like to hear your thoughts on articles and themes planned for future issues. Become a follower of the Lutheran Ambassador and feel free to share your thoughts with us.



The blessings of Bible study

BY SHIRLEY JACKSON

Any time people can meet together for the purpose of studying God's Word is special. The WMF Bible Study is unique in that it is written especially for the women of the AFLC. It provides women with a time to bond with one another as we share what the Lord is doing in our lives through His Word. This strengthens my faith and encourages me in my Christian walk. I want to offer a big thank you to the faithful Bible study writers who have been willing to take on the huge task of preparing a year's study for the WMF in order that we may grow in the Word and be blessed, so that we may bless others.

I asked some of our WMF ladies what the studies have meant to them. Here are a few of their comments:

"I enjoyed each lesson. Throughout the study I was reminded of how important God's Word is in sustaining us in our Christian life, that by having God in our lives He is [then] our Counselor and instructor. I learned that by staying close to Him in word and prayer, He will bless us with an abundant life full of joy and fulfillment."

"I enjoyed the Bible study, especially the history for each chapter. I felt that the studies were well written and easy to follow. The whole book helped me know more about my Jesus and my faith. It helped me to strengthen the things I know and stretch me to explore the new things I learned."

"I am excited to go to the Bible studies ... I had not studied the Bible before. I had read parts of it and only understood the parts that were familiar to me from my childhood. Through the Bible study, I gained so much in my life and became more a friend with Jesus. I appreciate what God has done in giving His Son for me."

"This study has been a real joy. There was so much in it that makes me appreciate our country's history and the godly men who taught us valuable lessons. We have freedom to meditate on and read God's Word. We are so fortunate to be in a Christian nation."

As our writer, Mary Christianson, closed our studies for 2010 with a lesson based on Psalm 23, I thought it so fitting that we focus on the Lord as our Shepherd as we begin this new year. Christianson wrote, "God tells us, 'I am yours and you are mine.'" How comforting it is to know how special we are to God. Christianson encouraged us to share with others our experience and testimony of the Shepherd's care in our lives. In this last lesson she also shared the history of Helen Steiner Rice and one of



her poems, which I cannot resist sharing with you.

No one ever sought the Father and found He was not there,
And no burden is too heavy to be lightened by a prayer.
No problem is too intricate, and no sorrow that we face
Is too deep and devastating to be softened by His grace.

No trials and tribulations are beyond what we can bear
If we share them with our Father as we talk to Him in prayer
And men of every color, every race, and every creed
Have but to seek the Father in their deepest hour of need.

God asks for no credentials—He accepts us with our flaws.
He is kind and understanding and He welcomes us because
We are His erring children and He loves us, every one,
And he freely and completely forgives all that we have done,

Asking only if we're ready to follow where He leads,
Content that in His wisdom He will answer all our needs.

God is Never Beyond Our Reach, by Helen Steiner Rice

If you are not involved in a WMF Bible study, it is my prayer that, if at all possible, you will become involved in one and receive all the blessings the Lord has in store for you.

Jackson is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Edinburg, N.D.

Georg Sverdrup Society hosts annual meeting



The annual Georg Sverdrup Society Discussion Forum was held Jan. 28 on the AFLC Schools Campus.

Sessions included a presentation by Pastor Stephen Mundfrom on "Georg Sverdrup's Doctrine and the Word," and a presentation by Pastor Jerry Moan on "George Sverdrup as Interpreter of the Word."

Larry Walker presented a new transla-

tion of Sverdrup's work titled, "Luther and the Bible."

A concluding session featured a panel discussion on the theme of "Georg Sverdrup and the Word," with Dr. Francis Monseth, Pastor Martin Horn, Pastor Mundfrom and Loiell Dyrud participating.

The forum is always open to the public.

TOP LEFT: Larry Walker, librarian for the AFLC Schools, presents a paper to the forum.

TOP RIGHT: William Kireri, a senior seminarian, listens to a panel discussion.

BELOW LEFT: Pastor Stephen Mundfrom participates in the panel discussion.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Pastor Connely Dyrud.

BELOW RIGHT: Dr. Francis Monseth.



Tangeled in my heartstrings

BY CHRISTINA OSTHUS

As a member of the FLY 2011 Committee, there are several convention areas that I am responsible for. The first three areas weren't necessarily chosen because of my interests or aptitude, though some fit better than others. Then there is evangelism ... uff da. This is the one area that I really, really want to fit me.

If there is one thing I am learning about evangelism right now, it is that evangelism is a visceral, often painful process that might often seem to be absolutely fruitless. However, that hasn't always been my experience.

Though it was a bit of a culture shock transferring from a conservative Bible school to a liberal university for college, I'd say my faith thrived there. As editor of the conservative student publication, each month I wrote an article from a Christian perspective that both atheists and Christians found highly thought-provoking. As a student leader, I often had random members of the campus community approach me to get the "definitive" Christian perspective. Mixed in with that oh-so-human pride and that oh-so-divine humility was just plain elation that I had finally "gotten it," had finally learned how to live out my faith in my daily life and reach close friends and acquaintances alike!

That was until God took me to my current location. When I knew God was calling me to be a teacher, I expected it to be a ministry, especially when I got a job offer to come to the Cheyenne River reservation in South Dakota. Because of my unique position at an alternative school, I actually have tons of opportunities to share my faith. When kids ask me what I do on the weekends, I tell them. When they ask me why in the world I'm

smiling while my broken-down car is in the shop, I tell them.

Regardless, I am learning that evangelism in some situations is much more painful than in my earlier experiences. Evangelism means "the act of sharing good news." However, the good news can only come after the bad: that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The meaning of law and gospel doctrine is that one message is empty without the other. But together, the two make a beautiful change inside someone's life. Here's the twist in my life on the reservation: my kids all know the bad news already. They all know that people are messed up and that they have no hope on their own. As the evangelist, I am the one being continually reminded of the bad news, and being continually overcome by the beauty of the good news. Now if only my kids would believe that second part, too!

Before you get pictures in your head of me (or any other Christian) being the conquering Christian warrior, I have one more thing to tell you: besides being gut-wrenchingly painful, I've also discovered that the rewards of evangelism are very rarely of this world. In all my seed-planting, I can't tell you one story about someone coming personally to me and asking for help in giving his or her life to Christ. That's okay, though. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:5 that those who pursue earthly goals receive their full rewards on earth. Think of the blessings we have waiting for us in heaven and the treasures which we know will be utterly worthless to us there, compared to seeing His face!

Osthus, Eagle Butte, S.D., is the secretary of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee.

Pastor Stephen Odegaard

Beloved member of AFLC clergy roster leaves legacy of pointing others to Jesus Christ

Pastor Stephen Odegaard went home to Jesus on Jan. 19 in Everett, Wash.

He was born Aug. 15, 1945, in Moline, Ill., and was raised in Tioga, N.D. After graduating from Tioga High School in 1963, he attended Minot State College, Minot, N.D., California Lutheran Bible School in Los Angeles, Calif., and Northwest College, Kirkland, Wash. In 1967, he enrolled in the newly established Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Minn.



During this period, Steve continued to date his high school sweetheart, and on Aug. 24, 1969, was united in marriage to

Linda Guttormson. This marriage was blessed with two sons, Kevin and David. Pastor Odegaard completed his studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1970 and was ordained as a pastor in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Over the next 40 years, he served congregations in Colfax, Wis.; Winger, Minn.; Hatton and Buxton, N.D.; Eugene, Ore.; Olympia and Kirkland, Wash.; two rural congregations (Beaver Creek and Norman) near his hometown of Tioga, N.D.; Snohomish, Wash.; Culbertson, Mont., and finally, Everett, Wash.

In 2001, Linda died after a lifelong battle with diabetes. Pastor Odegaard was himself battling with the same disease.

In June 2008, Pastor Odegaard was united in marriage with Peggy Schuman. He continued to serve Calvary Lutheran of Everett, Wash., while battling diabetes, needing kidney dialysis and suffering through having both feet amputated. In May 2010, Odegaard retired from full-time pastoral duties and transitioned to filling in when needed.

He is survived by his wife, Peggy; sons, David and Kevin and their families; step-children, Jim, John, and Cheryl; mother, Twyla; and brother, Tom.

A service was held Jan. 24 at Calvary Lutheran. Pastor Eugene Enderlein officiated. AFLC President Elden Nelson also spoke. Many others shared expressions of thankfulness for Pastor Odegaard and ways God had used him to bless their lives. Burial was held in Sunset Hills Memorial Park, Bellevue, Wash.

Pastor Odegaard had been a special and beloved member of the AFLC and, in particular, the Pacific Northwest district for many years. He will be sorely missed. His courage and cheerfulness while battling illness the past few years was a powerful testimony. Even though it was a challenge, he maintained a deep desire to serve the Lord and people and point others to Jesus. Thanks be to God for the example Pastor Odegaard set, his friendship and the many lives that were touched by his ministry. Blessed be his memory.

~By Pastor Craig Johnson

Bjornlie was educator, pastor

Pastor Clarence Lloyd Bjornlie, 85, of Fergus Falls, Minn., died Jan. 9 in Fergus Falls.

Born July 25, 1925, in Cooperstown, N.D., he was the son of Norwegian immigrants Lars and Bertha Bjornlie. He married Eleanor Eastvold Oct. 29, 1949, at Jevnaker Lutheran Church, rural Borup, Minn.

He grew up in Cooperstown and graduated in 1943 from Clearbrook High School. He served in the U.S. Army in France, Norway and Germany from 1944 to 1946. After his discharge, during a three-month bout with Rheumatic fever, he committed his life to God's service. He graduated from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., in 1950 with majors in business education and history and political science and minors in psychology and education. He taught at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, Fergus Falls, beginning in 1950. He became principal in 1954 and served until 1964. He attended Lutheran Brethren Seminary, filling in as a pulpit supply pastor as needed. They moved to Minneapolis in 1964, where he worked as the assistant to the University of Minnesota's vice president for educational relationships. He was in charge of the office of accreditation for all private schools in Minnesota. He received his master's degree in administration and completed all coursework for a doctorate. He served as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Brethren, Eugene, Ore., beginning in 1970. He served as president of the Lutheran Brethren Schools and president of the Minnesota Non-Public Accrediting Association. He served Berea Lutheran Brethren, Alexandria, Minn., from 1984 to 1988, Dovre and Union Lake parishes in Winger, Minn., from 1989 to 1993, before retiring to Fergus Falls in 1993. He was on the clergy roster with the AFLC.

Surviving are his wife; two sons, David (Vivian) Bjornlie, and Ethan (Carla) Bjornlie; three daughters, Cheryl (Stan) Olsen, Lori (Ken) Kristiansen, and Teresa (Mike) Heikes; one sister, May Bjornlie Folden Coon; thirteen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The service was held Jan. 15 at Bethel Lutheran, Fergus Falls. Burial is planned at Jevnaker Lutheran Cemetery, Borup.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Jan. 31, 2011

FUND	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$29,216	\$29,216	\$27,000
Evangelism	10,785	10,785	34,602
Youth Ministries	35,214	35,214	40,893
Parish Education	13,444	13,444	7,562
Seminary	19,810	19,810	19,114
Bible School	53,220	53,220	69,542
Home Missions	46,144	46,144	96,359
World Missions	66,304	66,304	30,682
Personal Support	41,963	41,963	26,231
TOTALS	\$316,099	\$316,099	\$351,986

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

Pay the price

I should have just kept quiet. I was on a used car lot and a salesman pointed to a nice car and asked if I liked it. I did, but I knew he wasn't going to sell it to me for what I could pay. He optimistically said, "We can work something out." It took a couple times of him going to the manager and coming back with a price that was too high for me and me repeating my price, till he realized I was serious and he admitted he wouldn't sell me the car for what I was willing to pay.

I would have enjoyed driving that car off the lot. But I didn't want to pay the price that was necessary. The issue wasn't whether I liked the car or not. The issue was the price.



Pastor Craig Johnson

It is similar in the church when it comes to evangelism. Most people in our congregations are in favor of it. We'd like to see more people coming to know Jesus. We want to see more evangelism happening in our congregations, but are we willing to pay the price?

Evangelism can be costly. Sometimes we have to pay a price when it comes to the closeness of a relationship. Things might be going fine in your relationship with a non-Christian friend or relative. You enjoy spending time together. Then the topic of spiritual things comes up and they discover that you think they're a sinner in need of forgiveness. The relationship might get a little tense. Are you willing to pay that price?

Your co-workers or your fellow students may have a different opinion of you if you invite them to an outreach event at

your church. You might pay a price when it comes to your reputation. They might start thinking you are one of those "Jesus freaks." Will you pay that price?

Evangelism usually involves serving people and demonstrating Christ's love in our actions. Listening to other people express their hurts can cost you time. Helping meet other people's needs often involves sacrificing some of your wants. It can cost you money and resources, comfort and convenience. Is that a cost you're willing to pay?

Evangelism can be costly in our congregations. We might have to make changes and sacrifice what is familiar and works best for us in order to reach more people for Christ. We might have to change when and where we meet. Maybe we would more effectively reach lost people if we changed our worship style or changed the format of how we do our Bible studies. Maybe some unchurched people would come to a later service, to a Bible study in a coffee shop, or to a vacation Bible school in a park. Doing things differently doesn't guarantee we'll reach more people, but are we willing to make changes if it'll bring people who are separated from Christ into a right relationship with Him?

We are not to compromise the truth of God's Word. But when it comes to matters that are not addressed in the Scriptures we ought to be willing to give up our preferences and sacrifice our wants if it'll help reach more people for Jesus. Evangelism is

that important. It's worth paying the price.

We pay the price because of the price Jesus paid. "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2, NIV). Jesus "gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). He "gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:6). The theme keeps being repeated throughout Scripture: Jesus gave Himself for us. He was willing to pay the ultimate price so that our sin could be

We are not to compromise the truth of God's Word. But when it comes to matters that are not addressed in the Scriptures we ought to be willing to give up our preferences and sacrifice our wants if it'll help reach more people for Jesus. Evangelism is that important. It's worth paying the price.

forgiven and we could be saved.

Jesus has a great passion to see lost people get found. A heart that is in tune with God's heart also has a passion for people and a willingness to pay the price necessary so that people can hear the good news and come to know Jesus.

something to share

A prayer for anguish

BY RACHEL SCHIERKOLK

I once knew a guy named Tony who played with me in a guitar quartet. Although likable, he had always intimidated me and been difficult to converse with. So when one day Tony asked me an unexpected question about my church, I was caught completely off guard. In my fumbling efforts to answer, I neglected to invite him to our Sunday morning service. Now, it may seem a small, forgivable slip, but I knew in my heart that God had just given me an opportunity that I had failed to take.

What was it that resulted in my negligence to share Christ with Tony? Beyond a sinful human nature, I believe it was my failure to pray for him. I saw Tony often, yet never thought to lift up his life to the Lord. Had I been doing this, might I have been more sensitive to God's leading?

I doubt there is a single church-goer in America willing to proclaim that he or she does not care about the eternal destination of unbelievers. However, for most of us, our behavior belies the claim that we actually do care. We concoct excuses for being passive about Christ, such as arguing that we don't need to "do" evangelism, since some are simply called to stay home and pray. Although God does appoint different roles in His kingdom, if we wish to assume that our job is to pray rather than share openly, we must ask this question: do we actually pray for the lost as though we cared? If not, how do we develop a prayer life that demonstrates genuine heartache for those living in darkness?

First, we must commit to pray for them whether we feel like it or not. Scripture clearly states that prayer is not an optional pastime, but a crucial element of our walk with Christ. We cannot allow our own apathy to get in the way of what God's Word tells us. I Samuel 12:23 (NKJ) says, "Moreover, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you ..." If our neglect to pray for others is sin, we have no room for excuses. Thus

when seeking to develop a love for the lost, we must force ourselves to intercede for them whether we anguish for them or not.

Second, once we have begun to pray, we must ensure that we continue in prayer until God grants us the anguish we seek. We know God has promised that whatever we ask in Jesus' name, we will receive (John 15:16). It is certainly God's will that we should experience a deep sorrow for our hurting world. Thus, when we sincerely ask Him to give us that love for them, we can have absolute confidence that He will fulfill our desire.

Finally, when by the grace of God He creates in us a heartache for the lost and a concern for their eternal destination, we must continue to pray with the same fervor, not becoming slack in the comfort of having "arrived" at our spiritual destination. There is no arrival point in prayer. Prayer is like food in that we need it to survive spiritually. I Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." We may try to avoid the significance of this passage by emphasizing what it does not mean (e.g. it does not mean we kneel mumbling beside our beds 24 hours a day/seven days a week), when we should emphasize what it does mean: never stop praying! A prayer for the unsaved should always be in our hearts.

In my embarrassment at having failed God when I failed to share His love with Tony, I could hardly bring myself to pray for him, fearing both the guilt of passivity and the trauma of taking action. I pray that I may never be so negligent again. I pray that God will overcome my trepidation, goading me irresistibly into praying for and proclaiming His name to those around me. This is His desire, and as a manifestation of our love for Him, it should be our desire as well.

Schierkolk, a junior at AFLBS, is the daughter of AFLC missionaries to Mexico, Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk.