

THE LUTHERAN 

NOVEMBER 2010

# AMBASSADOR



Wonder  
of His  
Word



# One

BY MARCUS DAHL



# another

**Y**ou have some incredibly valuable things, but you don't realize it. These valuables are easy overlooked, sometimes hidden, feared, and can even cause shame.

But the Christian can make good use of these things and glorify the Savior while using them.

The valuables are our mistakes, failures, frustrations and hurts. I want to encourage you with some examples.

A few months ago a friend of mine from church called. I asked him how he and his wife were, as well as their 1-year-old son. My friend is being treated for cancer and has gone through a lot. He told me he was fine and then returned the common gesture and asked how I was.

How was I that day? Terrible. I had an overwhelmingly bad day and told him about it. We prayed and even wept together during our conversation.

Then, do you know what he said? "Well, since you were honest with me about how you are, I will be honest with you."

Do you know what a great encouragement that was to me? My friend was a comfort me, as I was to him. As a cancer patient he is often the one being comforted.

I have another friend who is here studying at seminary. His name is Douglas and he is from Tanzania, Africa. Douglas has shared with me that in Tanzanian culture people are very open. Friends and even strangers will share their burdens with one another. They share them without even considering asking for assistance with their needs, but share as a matter of fact. I've notice

that Douglas finds smiling easy.

I think that oftentimes people who are not Christians think of us as perfectionists. Perhaps some of us are, though the truth is that we have struggles and failures like everyone else. Yet, we have a Savior who calls us to meet Him at the cross. He also calls us to love one another, to rejoice and weep with one another,

to rejoice in our sufferings, as well as many other encouragements.

There's an old saying about airing dirty laundry. I'm not expressing the thought that we should brag or rejoice in sinfulness. However, if we consider II Corinthians 1 we learn that the God of all comfort helps us, so that we can comfort others.

How do we honor Christ, encourage others and deepen our relationships? We do this by prayerfully considering when we should share these old private trials with one another, boasting in Christ who heals us. He continues to heal us and calls us to take risks with being uncomfortable.

In five years, 15 years, or maybe 75 years from now we will all be dead and hopefully spending eternity worshiping our incredible Lord of heaven and earth. Will you use up your life for Him and be used for His purposes in this way?

I pray that you will.

*Dahl, a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, is a student at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Plymouth, Minn.*

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When the Reformers made the distinction between church local and universal, they still insisted every believer be immersed in a local congregation, where the gospel is rightly proclaimed and sacraments rightly administered.

—Kevin Miller

Anyone who is to find Christ must first find the church. How could anyone know where Christ is and what faith is in him unless he knew where his believers are?

—Martin Luther

You should not believe your conscience and your feelings more than the word which the Lord who receives sinners preaches to you.

—Martin Luther

Pray, and let God worry.

—Martin Luther



# Words

By Jeremy Erickson

I have the highest respect for words. I didn't always. I struggled once with what seemed to me to be a calling to work with words. I was walking a gravel road near my parents' farm at sundown, resolving to give up speaking, singing, writing—words, words, words—to be solely, from then on, a man of quiet devotion.

Frustrated and conflicted, a decisive moment arrived on that road. I prayed desperately and out loud: "Do words really matter?"

At that instant, an otherwise lifeless cloud at the very edge of a clear blue sky lit up end-to-end with a dramatic burst of lightning. I stopped and stared. Then that was it. No more lightning.

I have the highest respect for words.

Words can change things. Words create worlds of possibility (I love you); they destroy them (you're fired). The highest hopes I have for the words I sing, speak, and write is that they will change the world for the better wherever they land. They carry my good intentions with them wherever they go.

So our words matter. Our words matter because they will things. Our words matter because our Maker's words matter. They will things. We bear the image of One Whose words create worlds (Light! Land!), reveal reality as it is (the Ten Words), and call forth life where life is not.

So Scripture, says he who writes Hebrews, is living and active. As the Word, it's alive and it does things. It bears the intention of Him from whom it came, and works with a will that brings light to darkness and life out of death. This is no small thing.

Not many years ago, I was very sick for a long while. While I was sick, I blogged regularly of my experience. I wrote publicly of my otherwise private suffering. As a songwriter, as one who worked with words, I found that I could describe the pain in ways that others could not. I learned that my words named the otherwise nameless pain for many people.

Those suffering similar things would write to me saying: "Yes, that is exactly how I feel. I knew it but didn't know how to say it. Now that you've said it, I can say it and my family will know, too. Thank you."

A few months ago, I saw another doctor for a chronic issue that

had escaped the inquisitive gaze of other doctors for five years running. She stared it down, got a good look at the thing, and named it. Ah, the relief of knowing at last what it was, what the problem was! Now, perhaps, something could be done and the pain would go away.

It is a fact known by many that children don't understand their world until they're given words to name what they see. More words. More world. But we make mistakes with our words. We think that "this" is "that" and not "this," until an authoritative voice speaks the corrective word and says, no, "this" is not "that," it is "this." Our world is changed. We are moved toward a more accurate understanding of the world as it really is.

Now, as an adult, the world I've grown to know, and I along with it, may look at this and say, "this" is good. And God looks at "this" and says, no, "that" is bad. That is sin, and you are dead in it.

His Word names the problem. What's real has been revealed.

So that is it, we say. Yes, now we know what we're dealing with. But the problem is beyond our fixing! For what is a dead man to do about being dead?

But God speaks again. There He is standing outside a tomb. He is crying. Then He speaks: "Lazarus, come forth!" A dead man walks from his tomb, and we see what God's Word can do:

By a word God raises the dead. By a word God speaks life into being. By His Word He brings life out of not-life. The Word of God does this.

The Word of God is living, buzzing, and rumbling with life, and when spoken into the dead heart of a dead man, the life of the Word brings life out of death, and a new world of possibility opens up before the man made new.

So: Light! Live! Love! The Word of the Lord is spoken, and by it we are saved. Living and active indeed! The Word bears the momentum of the Maker of worlds. It will make your world, and you will find that it is very much the kind of world for which you were made.

*Erickson is a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.*



# the Word





# bound to Scripture

By Pastor Don Voorhees

**W**e are just ten short years from the 500th anniversary of one of Martin Luther's defining moments—the Diet of Worms. In April of 1521, the civil government gathered the Imperial Diet at Worms. Luther had already been excommunicated by Pope Leo X. The purpose was to put Luther on trial, and either force him to renounce his writings and teachings or condemn him as a criminal—a false teacher. Luther stood before the diet knowing full well that his reputation, his work and his very life stood in the balance. Yet he did not bow to the majority opinion or compromise for the sake of getting along. He did not cave in to the overwhelming power of Emperor and Pope. He knew the only truly safe place was within the will of God as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

So, Luther spoke, “Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures or evident reason (for I believe neither in the Pope nor councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen” (Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*).

In this short statement Luther three times mentions Scripture. He clearly declares it to be the only infallible source of absolute truth. The “Word alone” is the basis by which we are to judge all matters of faith and life. It is how we are to decide how we live our lives. That's what it means to be Lutheran—so help us God!

But today, does this conviction characterize those who call themselves after Luther's name? It is easy to point our fingers at blatant examples where the Word of God is twisted and made to say what it obviously does not mean. Others declare the Word non-applicable or outdated. Some seem to care less what Scripture says as long as they get things their way. This has made schizophrenics of many Lutherans. On the one hand they profess, “God's Word is our great heritage, and shall be ours forever” (Ambassador Hymnal, no.

258). On the other hand, like the proverbial frog in the hot water, they have for years been desensitized by greater and greater conformity to the world at the expense of Scriptural integrity. Suddenly they awaken and ask themselves, “Who am I?”

There should be no place for gloating and looking down on these people just because we have been blessed to be part of a Bible-believing association, with Bible-preaching pastors. People are hurting and in turmoil. Congregations are in discord. Satan would like to use this occasion to bring faith into disrepute and drive people away from the Church. We need to be in serious prayer for these congregations and individuals, that they might be moved by the Holy Spirit to trust in and stand on the Word of truth.

Recently, a close friend of mine brought this point home to me. Speaking of the present turmoil in his congregation, he said, “It's the best thing that could happen, because it made us stop and realize all the little ways we have not been following the Bible.” As he went on to list specifics, I thought how easily this list could apply to any congregation. We who pride ourselves on being part of a Word-honoring church body have to look at the little ways we dishonor the Word.

In some ways it would be easier to stand up with Luther, in the face of opposition and say, “Here I stand,” than to live out such a profession day after day. It is easier to say, “I believe in biblical inerrancy!” than to stop thinking too highly of myself, quit gossiping or to start giving according to my means. It is easier to shout from the rooftops, “The Bible is my authority!” than to go out of my way to show love to my neighbor, or to forgive as I have been forgiven, or to share the good news with a family member.

Luther, by binding himself to the Scriptures, making his conscience captive to the Word of God, and taking his stand, whatever may come, is an example to us today. An example not only to what we should proclaim, but even more how we should live. May God give us the grace to do both.

*Voorhees serves St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran, Dannebrog, Neb.*











# more than *a* Book

By Heather Vogt

**B**asic Sunday school education ensures that most Christians can quote II Timothy 3:16-17 forward, backward, even while eating lutefisk upside down. Many of us love to tell people how Scripture can be applied to every life situation. We sing about the “B-I-B-L-E” and how “it’s enough for me!” But somewhere in all the singing and reciting and talking, many Christians have stopped using the Bible as anything more than a quote book, a devotional companion, a coffee table coaster.

Somehow, many Christians who know and love the Bible as “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” have stopped using it for all these things. The Bible has become little more than a book on their shelves.

Books can be a pleasant enough pastime, teach us valuable lessons or have meaningful quotes. A book may have wise words, guiding passages, or some academic authority, but it is not *The Word*, *The Guide*, and *The Authority*.

The Bible is more than just a book, because it is all these things for every person.

The Bible is and should be an authority in the life of God’s people. God makes that clear as we read it. Bible Gateway says the phrase “word of the Lord” has 232 exact phrase matches in the Bible, and in them we see what the Bible is: flawless, a lamp to our feet, word of life, the word of eternal life, living and active, right and true, the vessel by which the heavens were made, one that endures forever. It comes to prophets and kings, goes out among the nations, speaks the benefits of following it and the punishments for rejecting it.

God made every effort to show us just how vital His Word is to us, and that we must use it as our authority and guide to see its blessings in our lives.

So, what will our lives look like when the Bible is our authority? It is easy to be reminded of what and how great it is, but what can we expect to see once we actually start using it? Psalm 1:3 gives one illustration, showing that a person who studies God’s Word “is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” When we obey God’s Word, we become strong in Him and prosper

for God’s glory in the time and place that He has placed us. This does not necessarily mean wealth, health, and fame, as some would define prosperity. Prosperity in God’s eyes is the winning of His people and glory to His name in whatever ways He has intended for us.

We will also see purity in our lives when we honor the Bible. Psalm 119:9-11 says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Attention and obedience to the Word of the Lord results in the same toward His commandments. God makes His values and heart clear in the Bible, and when we see them displayed there we cannot help but bring them into our lives. Purity follows as a natural and spiritual result.

Matthew 7:24-25 shows another blessing of God’s Word that should spark hope in the soul and heart of every Christian. In this passage, Jesus tells us, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” Simply put, obedience and dedication to God’s Word, and the Son He has revealed in it will give us the strength and faith to endure anything this world might use to crush us.

Christians serve a great and mighty God, one Who loves us enough to reveal Himself and His will to us in the Word. In it, we have a constant and steady reference that will always show us His life, laws, and love for us. We can do nothing less than treasure such a great and perfect gift for the blessing it is. With Christ’s help, the treasuring of the Bible will make it more than a quote book, a coaster, a list of dos and don’ts.

It will be more than just a book.

*Vogt, a 2009 graduate of AFLBS, is from Sheridan, Ill.*



# Worthy

By Jim Lilly

**T**hanksgiving implies that there is someone to thank and praise for the things we have received. Obviously, for those who believe in an omnipotent, all-providing God, He is that someone. But our answer to why God is worthy of thanks and praise depends on our relationship with Him.

For instance, to a Muslim, this praise is filled with awe as one might describe a majestic mountain range in the distance, or an imminent and powerful storm that may sweep over him at any moment. It is the awe of a people who worship a mighty, but distant god.

A Jew would approach God as part of a people chosen and set apart by Him. God is close about them, dictating and directing every aspect of their lives. To the Jew, God has a personality, but primarily functions as a protector, director or judge.

Christians who are fully functioning in a Spirit-filled life have a very different relationship with and perspective of God. We are His sons and daughters. There is a conversational intimacy that our Heavenly Father offers us. We can climb into his lap and call him Abba, Daddy. When we speak in praise of God, it is because He defines both our world and who we are in it. As we approach Thanksgiving, we should ask ourselves if we are living that full Christian life or something less.

There have been periods of my life when I have lived a full Christian life and other times when I have lived at a much lower level. My lowest point in walking as a Christian came about six years after I had first committed my life to God.

I was spending every free moment “serving the Lord,” which included pastoral care, teaching, even doing some “apostolic” outreach in supporting small Christian groups. However, I had had no personal time with God for some months. I was too busy serving Him to spend time with Him. I was living a spiritual life that was more akin to a Jew or Muslim than to a Christian.

It was late summer and I was visiting a leader of an interde-

nominal prayer group when his son invited me to go flying with him in his light plane. As we took off from our first touch-and-go landing and climbed to about 100 feet of altitude, the engine suddenly quit.

A lot of thoughts went quickly through my mind. That I was going to die seemed likely. Finally, I thought, “Am I going to go to heaven?” The void in my personal relationship with God gave me no solace. I thought, “Well I’ve trusted Jesus to forgive my sins.” But

there was a huge vacuum in my spirit that should have been filled with God’s presence.

Over the next several weeks following the plane crash, I made numerous attempts to reach out and touch God without any success. I felt empty and helpless inside. I realized that nothing I did for God mattered if I didn’t have a personal and intimate relationship with Him.

Finally, on a Saturday morning I announced to my wife, Cindy, that I was going to pray until I touched God. I spent some time worshiping, praising, and praying to Him, but nothing worked. There was no connection with God. It was as if the heavens were sealed with doors of bronze.

Then I recalled how my 3-year-old daughter would approach me when I was busy or distracted. She would come into the room, walk over, then climb into my lap, give me a hug and say, “I love you.” No matter

what I was doing she had my full and undivided attention. At that point I decided just to tell God how much I loved Him. It was only a few minutes until I experienced the loving presence of my Heavenly Father.

As we approach Thanksgiving, let us stop a moment and take inventory of our current relationship with God. Are you fully living as a son or a daughter of God? As you pray Psalm 103, does it cause your heart to sing within you? Are you speaking of the person who defines your identity and hope?

*Lilly is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.*

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And all that is within me, bless His  
holy name.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget none of His benefits;  
Who pardons all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases;  
Who redeems your life from the pit,  
Who crowns you with loving kindness  
and compassion;  
Who satisfies your years with good  
things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the  
eagle.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

~Psalm 103



# of praise









# Watchful & thankful

By Pastor Henry Mohagen

**T**he theme of “being watchful and thankful” is very fitting as I write this. It is raining, and has been most of the night and morning. That in itself is not a bad thing, especially in an area that normally is starved for moisture. But if you are trying to combine grain or bale up some hay it can delay your progress in getting fall’s work done. You’ve got to watch the forecast.

The parsonage we live in is in the midst of a construction project. The north side of the roof had to be cut back for the new construction, causing the old house to be vulnerable to the rain. We’re thankful for the congregation’s decision to add on to the parsonage, but as we see the new construction getting soaked and water running into the old house, it is hard to be thankful for the rain at the moment. We watch the forecast and we’re thankful when it says better weather is coming.

That is how it is in life. Things happen that make it hard to be thankful at the moment for whatever it is that is happening. It is seeing through the present problems or inconveniences to what is to come that helps us to be thankful in spite of our situation. There are those who seem to think that if you are not gleeful in whatever life situation you are in, something is wrong. But faith is more than a feeling, which is important to remember because feelings go up and down.

It seems that in every congregation there are those who are eternal optimists and thankful for everything along the way. There also are those who seem to be against nearly everything that is happening in the church and not thankful for much of anything.

Throughout the Old Testament God’s chosen people looked forward to what was to come. In the captivity of Egypt they looked forward to their freedom, and when they received their freedom they wandered around for 40 years looking forward to the land flowing with milk and honey. They also looked forward for the Messiah to come, and by faith believed that their salvation came through that coming Messiah. Hebrews 11:13 tells of those Old Testament believers: “These all died in faith, not having received the

promises, but having seen them afar off.” So these Old Testament believers lived their lives through the good times and bad times, looking forward to the promise. They would get off track and come back to their senses, and when they did, they worshiped God and asked for forgiveness and gave thanks to God.

Paul, in Colossians 4:2, writes, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Paul was in prison when he wrote this, and his desire was that God would open a door for his message. That message was to proclaim the mystery of Christ. This mystery is that Christ went to die on the cross to pay the penalty of sin and to rise again in victory over sin. The mystery is that we can have forgiveness of sin because of Christ’s act of obedience. When we accept that great gift of forgiveness by faith, He forgives. Paul could see through his present situation to something better ahead.

If you look at many of the old hymns, they speak of eternity and better things to come. They also address the issues of sin, forgiveness and the struggles of life along with thankfulness throughout the verses.

We many times get hung up on the present problems and forget to look to what is to come. As believers in Christ, we look forward to eternity with Him in spite of our current circumstances. We also have the promise that He is with us all the time, here and now. We are told in Scripture to occupy until He comes. That means through the good times and the bad times, we are to continue doing God’s will.

The leaky roof is pretty minor compared to the problems many of you face on a daily basis. We know that when the project gets completed, the roof very likely will not leak, and we look forward to the extra room. As Christians, we make it through the trials of life by looking forward to being face to face with Jesus. Pray, be watchful and thankful. The forecast looks great.

*Mohagen serves Slim Buttes Lutheran, Reva. S.D.*



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# Stone & flesh

By Pastor Derek and Gail Kalkes

**T**he heart of man is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9, NKJV), but God has promised to give us a new heart, to exchange our heart of stone for a living heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), which is sensitive and malleable. On our own, we turn to evil. We need guidance and a new way of living. We need that heart of flesh.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ... although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him” (Romans 1:18, 21). God’s wrath will be upon people who have that stone heart. But under the New Covenant, Jesus explained that when our hearts turn from stone to flesh, we are born again through belief in Him, by faith, and have become His children (I John 3:1).





Like any parent, God takes pleasure in His children and shows love to them. And we know that it is because of this love that Christ changed our hearts. Once our hearts are changed from stone to flesh, we have entered into a familial relationship with God—Father-son or Father-daughter.

The way to abstain from the old way of life is to be filled with the Spirit and be thankful. “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:4). “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20). “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Colossians 3:15).

A heart of flesh has thanksgiving as part of its new self in Christ. This new heart of thanksgiving is joyful and glad, sensitive, filled with the Spirit, full of gratitude and devoted.

A heart of thanksgiving acknowledges that God has poured out His grace on us and called us His friends (John 15:14-15). His grace saved us from many things. His grace walked us through many situations. The Psalms remind us that His grace endures forever. Think back on your life. Where would you be without His grace? Isn't the grace and love of Jesus wonderful? Now doesn't that fill your heart to overflowing? If you have a heart of gratitude, it does.

God did all He did for us because He loves us. Because of all He did for us thanksgiving should overflow from us. God filled our heart with so much love and grace that it can't contain it all. It has to overflow.

Being thankful is being aware and appreciative of a benefit. We can't help but be thankful when we are aware of God's loving hand in our lives. We were created to steward what God has given us and to be thankful for what He has given us. Thankfulness is our response to His gift of grace and love toward us.

God is not pleased with a take-it-for-granted proud heart that thinks it can provide for itself. It becomes self-absorbed and stone cold. For those God has a warning. Romans 1:21 states that to those who knew God and didn't glorify Him or give Him thanks, He would turn their thinking futile and darken their hearts. People without God and with that kind of darkened heart cannot flourish or be blessed.

We need that new heart, that heart of flesh that is full of thanksgiving. Some scientific studies conclude that having an attitude of gratitude and saying thank you wards off mental illnesses, helps you sleep sounder, and increases your contentment, among other positive affects. The Bible encourages us to be of a sober mind and to be content. God always knows best.

*The Kalkes serve Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore.*



# Feed your family first

BY NATHAN OLSON

Jeff came home from work one night to his wife and three young children. They were waiting for the steaks and potatoes he had promised to bring home after receiving his paycheck. As he walked over to join them at the dinner table, he had nothing to give to his hungry family. They sat wide-eyed as he announced that they were not going to be having dinner that evening. Instead, they listened to him report about how he had given away the awaited dinner to a food bank in town. They would just have to wait to eat until another day.

"Another day" is the phrase that many of our AFLC ministries, pastors, missionaries, youth workers, and church leaders hear on a regular basis. There are many of those in our "family" of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations who would seek to have the resources to go forward in the ministry that the Lord has called them to, but are unable to do so because of the lack of finances and resources that are brought home.

Our Home Missions and Youth Ministries departments have to cut back on the number of churches that they could be reaching out to; our Parish Education department is unable to print projects that could be used for teaching and training; our World Missions department is unable to fully fund the projects of our missionaries; and some of our missionaries are even struggling to stay on the field because they have been forgotten.

Is this the way we should be caring for our family?

Why do we tolerate it? If we believe that what we preach and teach is firmly based on the Word of God, then shouldn't we seek to support our own ministries first? As a result of our firm stand on the Word of God, we should be in favor of nothing less. We should also seek to create a mind-set of giving in the lives of all Christian believers.

Many times we look to assist and support other ministries



outside of the AFLC. While it is essential to work with all ministries in the body of Christ, we must not forget about the need to help and to serve those who are closest to us. We, like a family, need to support and provide for each other.

Many times we show our love and support solely by words of affirmation and encouragement, but then we send our steak and potatoes away to others. It really does nothing for us or for our ministries when we say one thing and do another. We are in fact hypocrites when we announce that the ministries and ministers around us are essential and "God-sent" and then forget about their daily needs and ongoing vision.

For some of the ministries in our church body, the idea of expansion seems unrealistic. Instead, our ministries focus on meeting their most basic needs.

The questions that we need to take into consideration are: Who can we be looking to support in our AFLC ministries?

How can we show our love and support in more ways than just expressing thankfulness that they exist? In the early Church, many gave as much as they possibly could toward the cause of the greater Church family; how can we be modeling that in our own lives?

Paul writes in Romans 12:13, "Share with God's people who are in need," and in I John 3:17, we read, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

Therefore, let us show God's love to those around us, especially the ministry families around us who are in need, by supporting them not only verbally, but also with our steak and potatoes.

*Olson is a short-term mission assistant serving in Brazil.*





# Silent trip

BY PASTOR JASON HOLT

One fall morning, while traveling to my office, I noticed in the rearview mirror a dad driving the car immediately behind me with a teenage girl riding in his passenger seat. Immediately I thought about how common a scene this daily drive must be around the nation. What struck me in the moments that followed was the silence between the two.

The dad appeared lost in thought—thoughts about work, thoughts about deadlines, thoughts about money, and so on. The teenager played her part, too—the blank daze created by her iPod playlist with both earphones cemented in place.

The traffic moved in such a manner that over the next four or five minutes I was able to periodically check in on my parent-teenager sample case for communication. Still silence, every time! In fact, in the dozen glances that I took, it seemed as if I was looking at a photograph. The people and the posture did not change. The wheels were moving forward, but the relationship was not.

My curiosity was primarily rooted in being a dad myself: “Why doesn’t he say something?” I thought, “Why doesn’t he try to connect with her? Why doesn’t he at least ask her something?”

The traffic shifted and my observation group was gone. I hungered for them to communicate. Why is it so hard for parents and teens to talk in our culture? Does it have to be that way?

It does not! Many of you reading this article have healthy communication with your teens, but many of us struggle to connect the caring heart and godly wisdom we want to share with the adolescent in our home. What is getting in the way?

One issue is our stance as parents: “because I said so.” We may have the correct content in our communication, but when

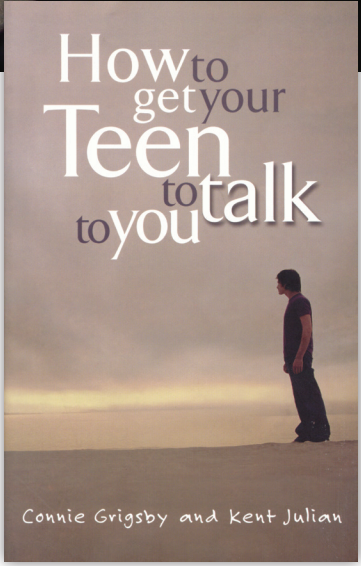
we share without a perceived reason it puts up walls instead of providing windows of understanding.

Another issue is our advance as parents: “because I am speaking.” A true conversation is not one-sided. “What about discipline?” you may ask. Certainly, a word of correction will be more one-sided, but if all communication with our teenagers is correction, then we have become police instead of parents.

The more I read of our Savior King in the Gospel accounts the more I see Jesus listening and asking questions. He heard the charge about the Sabbath and answered with questions (Matthew 12:1-8). The Messiah used questions when healing the paralytic (Luke 5:20-26). The Son of God taught through interaction with His disciples—including questions (Mark 8:17-21).

How do you encourage real communication between parents and teens? How do you engage in effective communication? Let us learn from Jesus. Parents, it is time for us to cut through the silent trip and ask as well as listen out of a heart for our teenagers.

*Holt is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries.*



## How to get your Teen to talk to you

Connie Grigsby and Kent Julian

If you are interested in reading on the subject, consider “How to Get Your Teen to Talk to You” by Connie Grigsby and Kent Julian.



## Retreat Center hosts upcoming events

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

### • Chosen Child Conference

For adoptive families

Date: Nov. 5-7

Speaker: Beth Thomas

### • Scandinavian Holiday Dinner

Enjoy lutefisk, torsk, Swedish meatballs, lefse and all the trimmings.

Time: Noon to 6 p.m.

Date: Sunday, Nov. 21

Buy tickets in advance and save.

Cost: \$16/adults (\$18 at the door)

\$10/ages 4-11 (\$12 at the door)

Kids younger than 4 eat free

### • Silent Prayer Retreat

Dates: Dec. 3-4, with option to include Dec. 5

### • Christmas Festival

Presentation of "A Carol," a musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Dates: 7 p.m. on Dec. 10, 11, 17, 18;

3 p.m. on Dec. 11; and 4:30 p.m. on

Dec. 12, 19

Cost: Free

Dec. 11 events include silent auction, craft sale, bake sale, kids activities, Christmas praise and worship.

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

## A word of thanks from the ARC

The ARC staff and board members would like to thank those of you who have prayerfully given to the ARC mortgage elimination campaign. Please continue in prayer that we might reach our goal of \$668,000 by the target date of December 31. If you would like further information about individual, group or church participation please contact Pat Flanders or Mike Fisk at 800-294-2877 or [arcadvancement@centurytel.net](mailto:arcadvancement@centurytel.net).



## Historic church featured in Everett tour

Calvary Lutheran Church, Everett, Wash., was one of eight churches chosen for a recent historic buildings tour by the local community. The self-guided tour, run much like an open house complete with docents, took place July 17. Calvary Lutheran is unique in that it was the only building on the tour where members have continually met in a single building throughout the history of the congregation. The church was built in 1902 by the congregation which was originally called Zion Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran. The name was changed in the 1940s to Calvary Lutheran.

## 2010 CHRISTMAS RESOURCES

### Musical Programs



**Away in a Manger**  
Rejoice in the birth of Jesus with this 25-minute Christmas musical celebration perfect for churches desiring an easy, yet powerful presentation to enrich the lives of children. With simple narration and familiar carols such as "Silent Night" and "Angels We Have Heard," your kids will enhance the story of that silent and wonderful night when Jesus was born. Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



**NEW! Baby Jesus, We Love You**  
Celebrate the birth of Jesus with this 25-minute Christmas musical for young children. Through simple narration and familiar carols such as "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "Hark the Herald," and "The First Noel" and never songs "Baby Jesus, We Love You" and "Christmas Prayer," children proclaim the birth of Jesus and express their love for Him. Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



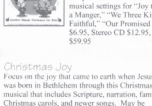
**NEW! Candles of Christmas**  
Celebrate the light and beauty of Christmas with this children's musical for churches desiring a simple seasonal celebration. With familiar Christmas carols such as "Joy to the World," "Angels We Have Heard," and "We Three Kings" and easy, Scripturally-based narration, your kids will honor the miracle of Christ's birth and experience the joy of the angels who first announced it! Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



**A Carol to the King**  
At Christmas we sing songs that speak of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus and songs that remind us of the significance of its meaning. This musical for the children is a combination of voices including SATB features eight original songs plus traditional carols woven together by a meaningful two narrator script. Book \$5.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, 10-pack CDs \$54.95



**Christmas Around the World**  
The birth of Christ is Good News for all the nations! This 25-minute program celebrates the birth of Jesus as seen through the eyes of children from many different countries and illustrates familiar Scripture, "God so loved the world." Simple narration and familiar carols in unique musical settings for "Joy to the World," "Away in a Manger," "The Three Kings," "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "Our Promised King Is Born." Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



**Christmas Joy**  
Focus on the joy that came to earth when Jesus was born in Bethlehem through this Christmas musical that includes Scripture, narration, familiar Christmas carols, and never songs. May be adapted for small groups or to include youth and adults. Book \$5.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, 10-pack



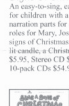
**The Flower of the Holy Night**  
While churches and homes are ablaze with poinsettias during the Christmas season, few people know the story behind this beautiful plant. This easy-to-use and sing Christmas musical celebrates the wonders of Jesus' birth in a retelling of the legend of the poinsettia. Book \$5.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, 10-pack CDs \$54.95



**I Witness News: Live from Bethlehem**  
With an engaging script, clever and fun-to-sing music, plus a perfect combination of humor and heart, this children's musical explores God's plan at the first Christmas and God's perfect plan for all of us. \$7.95



**A Shepherd's Story**  
Travel with the shepherds to Bethlehem in this mini-musical with simple narration for six shepherds, well-known carols, and never songs that tell the Christmas story. Book \$5.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, 10-pack CDs \$54.95



**Signs of Christmas**  
At any time, carry-on-stage Christmas musical for children with a strong Gospel message. Six narration parts for children, plus one speaking roles for Mary, Joseph, and children in hold the signs of Christmas: a wreath, a heart, a Bible, a candle, a Christmas present, and a cross. Book \$5.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, 10-pack CDs \$54.95



**Sing a Song of Christmas**  
Celebrate the birth of Christ with this theme song, familiar carols, and easy narration in a dramatic program that is easy to learn. Let the joy of the season ring throughout your church as children sing "Joy to the World," "Angels We Have Heard," "We Three Kings," "Go Tell It on the Mountains," "Love Letters of Christmas," and more. Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



**One Starry Night**  
It seemed to be an unassuming starry night, but that one special starry night changed everything! This new 15-minute Christmas musical is based on the shepherd's journey that first Christmas night. With simple narration and familiar carols "Joy to the World," "The First Noel," "Silent Night," "One Starry Night" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain." Book \$6.95, Stereo CD \$12.95, Accompaniment CD \$59.95



**Tell Me the Story of Christmas**  
Join this wonderful journey as the glorious story of the birth of Jesus is told. As the Leader reads the Christmas story, children have fun reminding her of the little things she skipped which are im-

## Christmas resource flier mailed to churches

Advent and Christmas resources and programs for 2010 have been reviewed by AFLC Parish Education. A flier of recommended materials (pictured at left) has been mailed to all AFLC congregations to the attention of the Christmas program director. Ask your pastor or church secretary to watch for it in the mail if you would like to look at the flier or are involved with planning a Christmas program for your church.

For more information on these resources, please contact the Parish Education department at 763.545-5631 or e-mail [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org).



Members of the AFLC's Women's Missionary Federation Board met in Minneapolis for all boards meetings in September. During these meetings, our board had the privilege of meeting with each of the AFLC ministries' directors and the schools' deans, which are supported by the gifts of the WMF. From these meetings we determine the projects that the National WMF will sponsor for the coming year.

This letter, which was delivered to us by Pastor Joel Rolf,

dean of AFLBS, is really meant for all women of the WMF. It is with joy that we share this with you. If you would like to see the campus, you are invited to attend the Dean's Luncheons that are held periodically throughout the school year. Upcoming dates include: Dec. 2, Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 24, and April 28. Call AFLBS for more information: 763-544-9501.

*By Lorilee Mundfrom, president of the WMF.*



## Association Free Lutheran Bible School

Teaching the Word. Training Servants. Transforming Lives.

September 20, 2010  
Women's Missionary Federation

Dear ladies,

"Dear ladies" is much more than a greeting on this thank you letter. We most certainly feel exactly that. The ministry of the WMF in support of AFLBS is held most affectionately and greatly appreciated by the staff and students alike. Not only does the WMF support our school concretely, but the example of service and commitment you display is held in high regard. We are filled with gratitude.

Thank you for your gifts to AFLBS, in the amount of \$4,281.41, received September 2 to assist with the cost of upgrades and repairs in the women's dorm.

The June to December 2009 gift of \$1,573.49 helped us to renovate the lounge and kitchenette area, providing the students with a nice place to gather for fellowship and cook snacks and meals. They've made cookies to share and a couple of students even colored pictures to put on the fridge for the "just like home appeal."

The lounge extends nice accommodations for our guest housing, as well.

The gift from January to July 2010, in the amount \$2,707.92, is being used for replacing the well-worn lounge furniture. Lasting friendships are formed at AFLBS as they gather together for spiritual support in studying God's Word, the sharing of music by the piano, or simply the fun of playing games. We are grateful to be able to provide comfortable furniture and surroundings for their times of fellowship.

Again, thank you so much. Your generosity is an encouragement.

Blessings,  
Sherry Mork  
AFLBS staff/Vision

3134 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth MN 55441-3008 ~ Ph 763.544.9501 ~ Fx 763.412.2047 ~ [aflbs@aflc.org](mailto:aflbs@aflc.org) ~ [www.aflbs.org](http://www.aflbs.org)



## Calvary Free Lutheran congregation dedicates new church building



Members of Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Fosston, Minn., went through a building process this past year and they are grateful to be worshipping in their new facility on the edge of the city at 910 6th Street NE.

The Calvary family stands in amazement at God's provisions. They concluded a three-year capital campaign in May that was the driving force behind the congregation moving forward in building the 7,600-square-foot structure. Ground-breaking took place at the end of August 2009. The congregation got involved installing the majority of the sheet rock and taping.

The congregation worshiped for the first time in the new structure on May 2. The building is equipped with six Sunday school rooms, offices, a larger sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, car port and is entirely handicap accessible.

Congregation members have seen the hand of God in every aspect of the building project and thank God for unity and many willing volunteers. On Sept. 12 Calvary held a dedication service with more than 200 people from the congregation and community participating. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, brought the message, and a video was shown of the history of the congregation, the building process and ministry today.

Calvary is served by Pastor Alan Arneson. All visitors are welcome to join the congregation for worship.



Members of Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn., dedicated a new church building on Sept. 12. (Pictures courtesy of Brose Photography.)

## Revised Brazilian evangelistic manual presented to conference

Short-term assistants worked on revision project

Under the direction of AFLC missionary Pastor Jonathan Abel, short-term missionary assistants Nathan Olson and Jon Nelson have completed a revision and update of the *Manual Evangelico*. Containing the doctrinal stance of the AFLC-Brazil, the manual is often used for new member classes and confirmation.

It is hoped that the updated manual will be able to more

adequately meet the needs of the congregations in Brazil, and will be used for solid training in the Word of God and doctrine of the AFLC. The revisions more adequately explain the position of Free Lutherans and address the changing culture. Formerly 80 pages long, the new manual contains 200 pages.

The manual was presented to the Annual Conference in Brazil Oct. 8-10. Olson and Nelson, who have served as short-term assistants in Brazil since early 2010, will return to the United States on Nov. 1.



# When 'no' is better

BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

It was Tuesday afternoon and the humidity was building to the point that even the 100-degree heat could not keep it from falling as rain. When we looked at each other's clothes, we couldn't tell if we had been in the rain or not. In the midst of the heat, Luther Dasari, president of the AFLC India, turned to me and said, "You will be preaching tonight."

I felt guilty turning him down, but I replied, "No, this is a student mission trip. It's not about me, but about the youth. The youth will minister tonight."

Luther seemed to understand, and the students began to talk about who would sing, give a testimony, and especially who would proclaim the Word that night. One of the youth, 16-year-old Zach Knutson, spoke up in his calm, mellow voice saying, "I can do that."

Having work to do, I was unaware of all that the team members were up to that afternoon. I understood the girls went shopping for clothes appropriate in India. It was relayed to me that Zach went to his room and spent time prayerfully working on his message.

The humidity and the temperature began to ease by evening and the car's air conditioning was appreciated as we drove to the village of Etheru. We stopped for dinner at a friend's home. The meal included some familiar delicacies: potato chips and sandwiches. It was good not having the tension that goes along with being on deck to speak that night, but the guilt still remained.

By the time we arrived at the church, it was full and the music was engaging. The service progressed and each student stepped up to the plate and ministered: one gave her testimony, one played the violin, another orally taught a portion of Scripture using drama, and we all sang in English.

When we were done, Zach, in baseball terminology, stepped into the batter's box. Here was a young man called up from the AAA. This was his first trip to the majors. He took a swing at the task before him and connected. The sound that emanated told you that he hit it out of the park even before you saw where it landed. The tone was solid and weighty.

It's hard to contain your emotions when this happens at a major league baseball game. But it's even more meaningful in the real game of life, the Lord's work. You can't hide your emotions when a young guy steps up to the plate, and with the crack of his voice



takes a swing at ministry, when he makes a solid connection between the Word and those who hear, and it pushes the team forward with a score that is written in the Book of Life.

At the end of the day I asked myself several questions. What did this mean for the people who heard the Word? What did it mean for the young man who experienced the power of God working through him? What would have happened if I would have said yes and preached in his place?

*Palmer is the director of AFLC World Missions.*



Zach Knutson, part of an AFLC Student Missions trip to India last summer, taught a group of students (top) and prepared for bringing a message (above).



## People and Places

**Stephanie Nelson, Michael Osthus and Kayla Paige**, all recent graduates of AFLBS, have accepted calls to serve as parish workers at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Madison, S.D.

**Sam Nash** has resigned as director of Student Development at AFLBS. The school is currently seeking a full-time replacement. For more information, visit the school's Web site at [www.aflbs.org](http://www.aflbs.org).

Correction: **Pastor Tom Brock** has stepped down as senior pastor at Hope

Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Correction: **Ebassa Berhanu's** name was spelled incorrectly in the October issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*.

Correction: **Pastor Joel Walde's** name was spelled incorrectly in the October issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*.

Members of **Grace Free Lutheran**, Valley City, N.D., dedicated a recently constructed church building on Oct. 7.

**Pastor Jeff Swanson**, Naknek,

Alaska, was the featured speaker at the Lutheran Mission Societies-Alaska Mission's annual meeting Sept. 9 at Dell Lutheran, Frost, Minn.

Members of **Good Shepherd Free Lutheran**, Camarillo, Calif., hosted a grand opening Sept. 19 for a church campus recently purchased from First Lutheran Church in Camarillo. The 3.4 acre property contains four buildings, including a sanctuary, preschool, fellowship hall and education building.

## AFLC memorials: September

### AFLBS

Pastor Erwin Brandt  
Herb Presteng (8)

### AFLT

Marlys Johnson  
Herb Presteng (2)

### Evangelism

Pastor Erwin Brandt

### General Fund

Herb Presteng

### Home Missions

Herb Presteng

### Parish Education

Herb Presteng (2)

Palmer Haugen

### WMF

Borghild Curtis  
Marie Kost  
Fern Barstad  
Ann Thompson  
Beatta Gilbertson

### World Missions

Ted Bouchard  
Herb Presteng (2)

### Youth Ministries

Herb Presteng

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Sept. 30, 2010

FUND	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$26,648	\$236,848	\$225,812
Evangelism	14,381	99,122	73,275
Youth Ministries	5,478	101,677	67,596
Parish Education	4,569	79,465	75,540
Seminary	13,479	144,579	136,377
Bible School	19,675	333,022	300,054
Home Missions	28,895	302,382	244,880
World Missions	32,588	210,152	174,586
Personal Support	26,927	242,638	304,262
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$172,639</b>	<b>\$1,749,885</b>	<b>\$1,602,381</b>
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			

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/s/ Ruth Gunderson, Managing Editor



# A heritage to be thankful for

**A**t a recent community pastors' banquet I sat next to a pastor from an Assembly of God Church. He asked about the church body I belonged to and I explained about the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and our beliefs and practices. He said, "You sound like Lutherans who try to follow Luther." His view of Martin Luther was much more positive than his view of Lutherans.

I am glad to be identified as one who believes like Luther did and tries to walk in his footsteps. It is a privilege to be in a group that derives its name from one of

the great heroes of Church history.

While Luther is held in high esteem by most in the evangelical world, it is a different story when it comes to the name Lutheran.

I have been at evangelical events and met people, and after I tell them I'm a Lutheran the tone of the conversation seems to suggest they are wondering: "What is he doing here? He probably doesn't believe the Bible."

Some Lutherans have wandered far away from Luther's example of standing on the Word of God and looking to it as the authority over our beliefs and actions. It is understandable that evangelicals would be suspicious of ones who call themselves Lutheran if the only Lutherans they have ever met question the truth of Scripture. But just because Lutheran might not be the most positive name in the eyes of some, it does not mean we should abandon the name. We need to show the world a different kind of Lutheran.

I'm thankful I'm a Lutheran because of the way Lutherans, at least those who follow Luther, handle the Scriptures. We view it as the inspired Word of God, without error. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17, NIV).

Scripture is the guide we follow, the law we submit to and it contains the promises we cling to. "Nothing is more effectual against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts than to occupy oneself with the Word of God, talk about it and meditate on it," Luther said.

Because the Scripture is inspired by God we cannot expect we will ever fully understand it. Luther said, "You should diligently learn the Word of God and by no means imagine that you know it." Lutherans seek to grow in our understanding of Scripture, but we acknowledge our limitations. We admit that the things of God retain an element of mystery.

This recognition of God being far above us is demonstrated in our understanding of the sacraments. Reading some verses from the Bible, praying and putting water on an infant's head doesn't seem to do any good or make sense to our human reason. But we hold to what the Bible says: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the

gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:38-39). We don't understand it all, but we do what the Bible says. We give thanks for the gift of baptism because of God's promises.

Luther, in a debate with Zwingli regarding the Lord's Supper, would not compromise his stand on the Word of God.

*Because Scripture is inspired by God we cannot expect we will ever fully understand it. Luther said, "You should diligently learn the Word of God and by no means imagine that you know it." Lutherans seek to grow in our understanding of Scripture, but we acknowledge our limitations. We admit that the things of God retain an element of mystery.*

Luther insisted that Jesus did not say, "This symbolizes my body." He said, "This is my body ... This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26, 28). It is still bread, it is still the fruit of the vine; but Christ is present. It is a bit of a mystery, but that is because it is of God. We don't compromise or twist the Word to make it understandable.

Lutheran is not a name to run from, but a heritage to be thankful for. It is a way of handling the Scriptures that the world needs now as much as ever.



Pastor Craig Johnson



---

*building the base*

BY PASTOR TOM TUURA

# The *something* we long for

**A**re you considering becoming religious? Are you thinking about going to church? Have you started taking an interest in dogma, or maybe thought about voting Republican?

No? Why?

You already believe in the Bible, Jesus, the disciples and all that? You already *are* a Christian?

Oddly, Christianity is often defined by all the outward descriptions listed above, and more. But to define it as such is like defining the loving companionship of a husband and wife only in terms of taking out the garbage, doing the laundry or grocery shopping.

Yet, there is *something* that interests you about Christianity, isn't there?

This is perhaps why the young man approached Jesus in Luke 18:18-27. He had wealth and religion, but he was looking for that *something* else. But he couldn't pay the price, because his own wealth had bound his heart.

Perhaps that something that interests you is the same thing that has inspired men and women for centuries. That *something*

that interests many people is the desire for a loving Father who guides, directs, comforts and is a companion on life's seashore.

This desire for something more is a timeless, universal hunger. It is the real motivation for men and women of all places and times to seek God.

The hymns we sing pay tribute to these universal hungers. One of the very old hymns of our faith is, "All Creatures of our God and King," written by St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226). He wrote, "And all ye men of tender heart, Forgiving others take your part, O sing ye! Ye who long pain and sorrow bear, Praise God and on Him cast your care: O praise Him, Alleluia!" (Ambassador Hymnal, no. 183).

Another, more recent, hymn by Fanny Crosby echoes those hungers, "All the way my Savior leads me, What have I to ask beside ..." (Ambassador Hymnal, no. 469).

I began thinking in this vein during the postlude after church one Sunday. The pianist played a familiar tune, which I hadn't been thinking about specifically. But I was compelled to begin singing the words, which came back to me from some corner of my memory: "Jesus my Lord will

love me forever, From Him no power of evil can sever, He gave His life to ransom my soul, Now I belong to Him ..." (by Norman J. Clayton).

Millions of believers around the world have this common love and care from our Heavenly Father, and there is a special bond between believers, as well. This bond spans borders and languages. Christian author and apologist Ravi Zacharias retells the story of two men who randomly cross paths on a street corner. One is humming a tune. They don't speak each other's language. But as they approach each other, the second man becomes excited when he recognizes the song—it's a hymn. They can't speak each other's language, but they share a spiritual fellowship. That's amazing!

If you are interested in eternal life, a secure shelter and warm hearth for your heart, it is only found through Christ Jesus. Men and women spanning time and distance share this desire with you. Reach out to Him, whom to know aright is life eternal.

*Tuura, who serves Living Word Lutheran, Windom, Minn., writes a blog at [www.part-timecountrypreacher.blogspot.com](http://www.part-timecountrypreacher.blogspot.com).*