

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

SEPTEMBER 2010

YOUTH ISSUE

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English Bible Camp
Recognition of attendance at the English Bible Camp hosted by the
Lutheran Church of Iowa, Ukraine, and AFLC Students
at the Lutheran Church of Iowa, Minnesota, on July 19-23, 2010.
Olga Bych

Persevere

BY MARCUS DAHL



Do you have Internet access? I remember when I first began using the Internet back in 1995. I would carefully type in the World Wide Web address to go to a site. Sometimes I would go and pour a cup of coffee or do some laundry. I did this because it often took five minutes to download one page of text.

Now you can download an entire book in a matter of seconds. You can also download a favorite song or even an entire album—I mean an entire CD, or whatever they are called now—in minutes.

When I was a boy in the 1970s there was a company in Minnesota called K-Tel. They would sell record albums over the television. You could call a special 800 number or mail your money in to buy music records. Delivery after payment was four to six weeks. That's 30 to 45 days.

In 1986 my Dad brought home a facsimile machine. This miraculous device had the ability to send information on a piece of paper over the telephone to another facsimile somewhere else in the world. It took several minutes of screechy noises over the telephone, but it worked. Amazing!

I like to read books made out of paper. I have several underneath my bed, one is from the early 1900s by R.A. Torrey, titled "How to Work for Christ." Some of his writings are antiquated. For instance, he advises that street cars are not as favorable for witnessing as trains. However, consider his great advice on perseverance:

"Men are not usually won to Christ in a day. You must hold on to men day after day, week after week, month after

month, year after year ... Study how to get at men who are unreachable. Men who cannot be reached in one

way can in another. There are very few men in the world to whose hearts there is not an open door somewhere, if only we will search diligently until we find it. If we cannot get in at the door, perhaps we can break up the roof and get in that way ... Take time; never give up; and do thorough work. I waited and watched fifteen long years to get my chance with one man. Never a day passed for all those fifteen years that I did not speak to God about that man. At last my chance came, and it was my privilege to lead him to Christ. He afterwards became a preacher of the Gospel, and is now in heaven."

My fellow Christian, don't give up! Take your time. Know that the Lord hears your prayers and is always working. Share and share and share the gospel. Don't be afraid. Jesus will protect and guide you by His Word and Spirit.

Luke 15:10 says, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

Joyful angels, patient and persistent Christians, repentant and forgiven sinners—what an amazing Lord and Savior!

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

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Children have more need of models than of critics.
—Carolyn Coats

When I was young I was sure of everything; in a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half so sure of most things as I was before; at present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to me.

—John Wesley

You have to love your children unselfishly. That is hard. But it is the only way.

—Barbara Bush

If I could relive my life, I would devote my entire ministry to reaching children for God!

—Dwight Moody

Every child you encounter is a divine appointment.

—Wess Stafford

A photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a grey t-shirt, standing and speaking to a group of children. The children are seated at tables, some with their hands raised. The setting appears to be a classroom or a community room with large windows in the background showing greenery. A bulletin board with various photos is visible on the wall behind the man.

AFLC Student
Missions leads a
day camp in Lviv,
Ukraine.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

by kathy dahl
pictures by ruth gunderson

“What are you Americans doing here?” she asked me as we played catch with a go-go ball. There I was, halfway across the world, and little did I know that a simple question would give me a greater glimpse of what ministry is all about.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to join nine others in July on a short-term mission trip for two weeks to Lviv, Ukraine. There we worked with missionaries Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel (and little Hannah). For five of the ten days we spent there, we led an English day camp consisting of music, Bible lessons, lunch and games.

In the middle of the week during game time, one of the students asked me, “What are you Americans doing here?”

“What are we doing here?” I thought somewhat sarcastically, “How can you ask such a question? This is the third day you have attended the day camp and you still don’t know why we are here?”

I was honestly discouraged that this student would ask me this question. I thought about it during the remainder of the week and would often ask myself, “What *am* I doing here?” I felt as though the small camp of 17 students was not worth going halfway across the world to Ukraine for. After all, if the students didn’t even know why we were there, then maybe they weren’t getting anything out of us being there.

Despite these thoughts in the back of my head, I kept teaching, kept playing with the students, and kept trying to communicate with them despite the language barrier. By the time Friday flew around and camp came to an end, it was very hard to see the students go. After building relationships with these kids over the last five days, it was difficult knowing that I would probably never see them again. All of the students were sad as we exchanged hugs and e-mail addresses. Some were so sad that they were crying and telling me that they loved me.

That was when I realized that the work that we did there had not been in vain. What made the biggest impact on the students was just our willingness to come and spend time with them while sharing the love of Jesus with them. We can send our support, money, and love, but nothing is more important to anyone than time.

As I look back on Jesus’ ministry here on this earth, I see that He didn’t spend all of His time teaching. He spent a lot of time building relationships and pouring out His love on people. I wonder if Jesus ever felt at times that His work wasn’t accomplishing much. But we know His work was definitely not in vain.

Through a simple question, I was reminded that building relationships is what ministry is all about. By showing people that you love and care about them you are showing the same kindness Jesus did. It opens opportunities and it builds trust. I was also reminded that the work that is done for the Lord is never done in vain. The Word of the Lord never returns void. It doesn’t matter how many are hearing the message, as long as His Word is going out. Jesus is always willing to search for even one lost sheep. So should we.

If you are feeling discouraged in your place of ministry, take heart in knowing that your labor is not in vain, but press on for the goal that is to come (I Corinthians 15:58).

Dahl, a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., is a junior at AFLBS.



Jon Langness, a team member from Ishpeming, Mich., listens as Yura, who lives in the neighborhood, retells a Bible story.

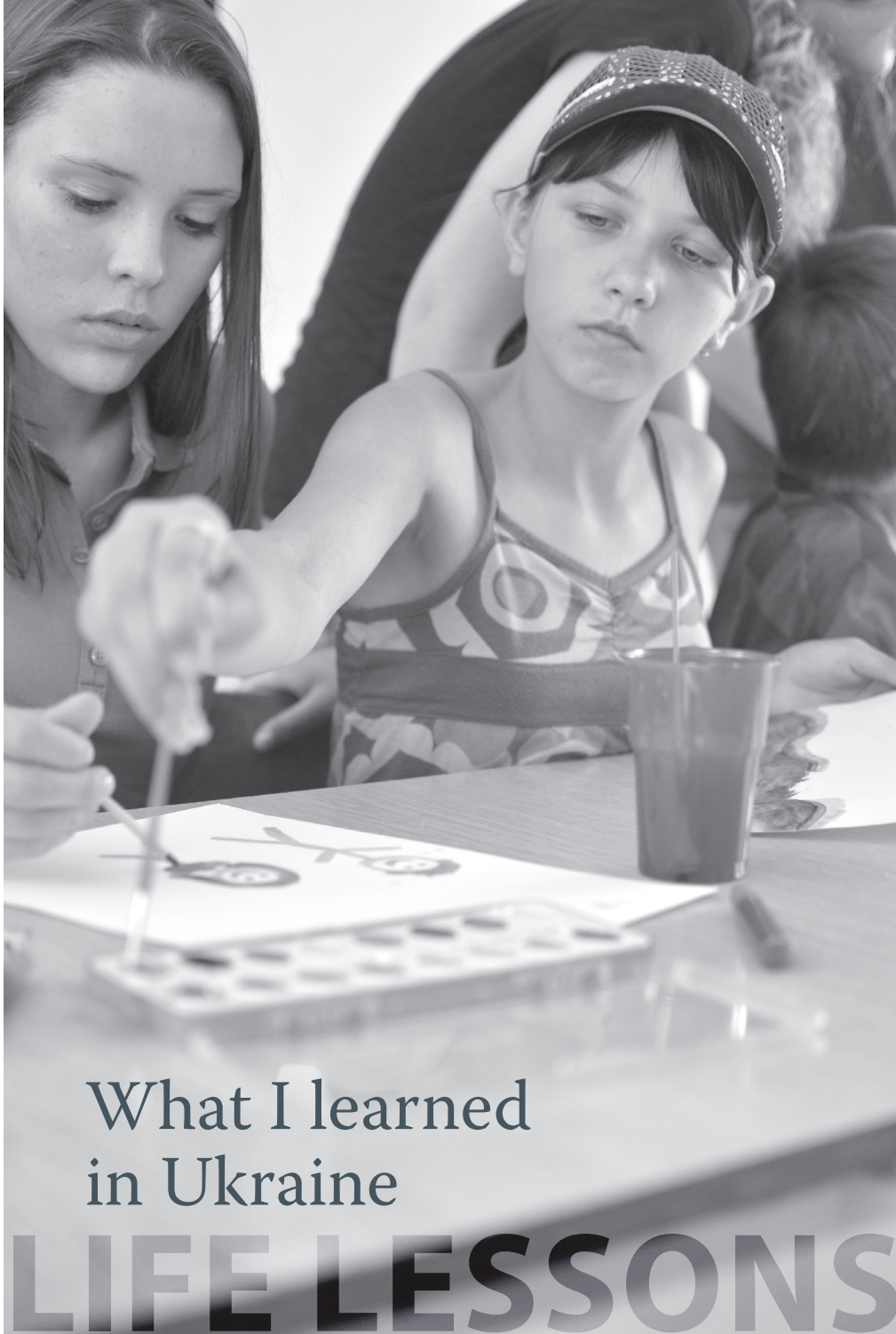


Katy Dahl (center), from Felton, Minn., made fast friends with Katya and Yulia, both from the Chmiel's church.



One of the English Bible camp kids shows his mother a group picture on the last day of camp.

Opposite page: Pastor Tomasz Chmiel, an AFLC missionary on loan to East European Mission Network in Lviv, Ukraine, leads a discussion with young kids during the day camp.



What I learned in Ukraine

LIFE LESSONS

I have learned that God works in mysterious ways. Not that that is any surprise. He helped me to overcome the language barrier, the traveling, and my lack of patience. But he didn't do it for me. I realize now after looking back on it that He did it for Himself. He did it so that I can give glory to Him through teaching the kids and building relationships.

♦ Zack Gann, Gifford, Ill.





rachel tanner



sam menge



zack gann



sam nelson



hannah twedt



jon langness



katy dahl



caleb peterson



megan schierkolk



ruth gunderson

What was most emphasized to me about God this week was how He works in ways we wouldn't necessarily expect. For example, we were able to meet and get to know two boys while playing Ultimate Frisbee in the park. We weren't actively involved in mission work as we were playing, but God used our game to bring those two boys to camp. This was a reminder to me that God wants us to be missionaries no matter where we are or what we are doing.

• Megan Schierkolk, Jerez, Mexico

I learned that God can take people who He wants to work through and make them His tool if they let Him. People who we don't expect anything from can do great things for God and His kingdom.

• Hannah Twedt, Frost, Minn.

God will always do His own work in people's hearts, my job is just to educate and inform.

• Rachel Tanner, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Working past a language barrier shows the person you care about them and are willing to make the effort to get to know them.

• Sam Nelson, Ontonagon, Mich.

... [the trip] really showed how God can work through our weakness in communication, or teaching, to bring people to Him.

• Caleb Peterson, Valley City, N.D.

One thing is for sure and that is that God works in all things. He provided us with a great Christian translator, kids to come to the camp (even if the numbers at first were not very large, we could spend quality time with them), a great facility to have the camp in and perfect places to stay. ... He also put together this team—we knew how to have a good time, laugh at jokes, and, more importantly, to interact with the kids, serve others, and share the Word of God.

• Jon Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.

I was reminded that God is much bigger than I am and that He is at work all over the world. It is amazing to me that there are so many people in the world and He knows our intimate thoughts and wants a personal relationship with us.

• Katy Dahl, Felton, Minn.

Opposite page, from top left: Rachel Tanner paints a Bible story with Yulia, one of the students.

Students Slavik and Ilya repeat a Bible story to each other.

Megan Schierkolk and Dima, a Ukrainian student, listen to a Bible study.

Tanya and Olga, two of the camp participants.

Edgar Volkov, the team's translator, sits with a group of boys to talk about a Bible story.

The camp participants and the student mission team.

Hannah Twedt and other team members teach a group of girls how to make a gospel story bracelet.



the grace to change

by hannah martin

On Dec. 19, 2005, I found out that my dad had cancer. I was 9 years old. I don't remember much about the time, except that it was hard, and I was scared. Always scared—mainly for me and for my dad. Life without him was something that I couldn't comprehend, nor did I want to. Every time a moment of peace would come, I was presented with the harsh reality that my dad could be gone, and soon.

Gone is such a sad word. It's that moment when you know that life cannot ever return to how it was—the moment when life is suspended and you realize that the path you were on cannot carry you anymore.

Gone means change; it means that you must be renewed. Life will be different—no matter what the outcome, the pages from then on will have a different cadence, marked differently because of the events beforehand. It means that you must accept and adapt, *you* must change. It means that you will have to learn to live again.

Learning to live again is a path that I've been taking ever since my dad was diagnosed. It means trusting in the Lord—completely. There's no side-path, no quick route. It's a long and hard journey, but it's what needs to be taken in order for life to continue, in order for life to have meaning. Putting our complete faith in Him is a path that requires perseverance, trust, and hope. *Always* hope.

But God is hope. And God is life.

I have very little memories from that difficult time as I've shut most of them out. The fear that always lingered with me in that time is present in each of the few memories I have, and it's hard to have them resurface. For one quivery moment, I forget that it was almost five years ago, and that I've been remade again—made complete because of my Jesus. For one moment, I'm suspended in that time, and I feel afraid.

But I've realized that I must go back to them; I need to cleanse myself of all the fears and doubts that have haunted and plagued me since. No matter how painful they may be, I need to let them come, for that is the road to healing.

I'm crying as I write this, but I have a memory too poignant, too painful, and too beautiful that I can't let it disappear.

Because of the cancer treatments, my dad was too weak to reach over and tie his shoes. It hurt to see my dad in that much

pain—it made me cry and feel weak. I hated seeing him unable to perform a task that, at any other time, would have required no effort and no thought.

So I would tie his shoes for him.

I remember him asking me as he was sitting on the couch. His voice was tired and I felt my heart go out to him. I don't remember his words, but I remember that he asked me to tie his shoes.

I hurried over and bent down. The laces were knotted and tight, and it took me some time to un-knot and loosen them so my dad could get his feet in. Then I gently tied them. They were big brown shoes with thick brownish-green laces.

I can still feel his hand in my hair as he whispered softly, lovingly, but sadly, "Thank you, Hannah. I love you." I reached up and hugged him, and told him that I loved him.

And this simple memory makes me cry. Because in that memory, all of my fears, all of my pain, all of my sadness, and all of my hope could be found in that simple act of tying his shoes. In that moment, God gave me the reason to change and to accept change. That was when I realized that no matter what happened, my life would be different. And in that simple moment, I found the strength to continue on—to live *real* and to live truly. In that one moment, I see why I changed.

My dear daddy was cancer free in March of 2006. I'll hear his laugh tonight and hug him—I'll cry as I see him. And as I write this, it makes me remember how precious life really is. Because I could have lost him. Not forever, but my life on this earth would have been without my dad. I would not have him in all of the precious moments to come in this life. Never again until heaven would I be able to simply enjoy his company—to laugh, cry, or talk with him.

And that is why I am on my road to healing. Not because I lost him, but because I could have. My family has been so blessed that he is here today. Knowing that he could have died makes me want to cry and reminds me of my desperate need to cling to the Lord.

I'm walking on this path of God's; going along on His journey. My road has been altered—it always will be—but I am not afraid. No matter what comes, that simple act of accepting change and embracing faith in Him, that is what sustains me. That is why, in Him, I am healed.

Martin is a member of Living Hope, St. Michael, Minn. You can read her blog at manyrandommusings.blogspot.com.



Truth brings freedom

by pastor Jason Holt

It was my first time waterskiing. My friend had stressed to me repeatedly that no one got up on the first try, so I needed to be ready to flounder in the Wisconsin lake. I took these terms as a challenge and listened closely to his beginning instructions. When the time came, I gripped the handle, bent my knees, and got up to my feet.

Victory, right? Not quite.

My friend's father was driving the boat. He was convinced that such an accomplishment should not come without the accompanying point of humility. After minutes of gentle skiing, he raised the speed on a curve. Head over skis, I dove into the water. My firm attention to the beginning instructions must have contributed to my missing how to finish well. For what seemed like a dozen seconds, I was pulled like a prize fish underwater. Finally, it hit me: let go.

Holding on to the truth of how to start got me up on the water. Letting go of the lie that I was in control released me to the freedom from the rope.

FLY Boot Camp 2010 focused on holding on to truths and letting go of lies. The truth of a personal faith in Jesus and the priority of His Word were central. Teens were invited to pray and to invest with friends with the goal of introducing Christ to them. At the same time, lies about evolution and naturalistic thinking were uncovered by the evidence from the Lord in creation. Knowing what to hold on to is crucial to finding freedom.

Our Savior was speaking to some Jews who believed in Him about this reality in John 8:31-36. Jesus points to the relationship of truth and freedom by remaining in His Word (31-32). Then the Jews stand on their own efforts with a lie (33). Jesus clarifies between the slavery of sin and the position of the son (34-35), and caps His answer with the words (36): "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

In the open letter on the next page, one brave teen is making known what is important to her. She is telling the truth. For so many of us, the truth can be difficult to face. It's time to let go of what is not true and cling to Jesus, who is truth. He alone brings the freedom for our souls.

Holt, a member of Living Hope, St. Michael, Minn., is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries.





Dear friends,

This is hard to start, because I want to tell you everything. I want you to know the truth. Trying to fit everything into one letter would be impossible, it would take a book. However, there's already a book of truth written: the Bible. Now I know you probably don't want to hear this, in fact, I can see your eyes rolling at the mention of the Bible, but it's something you need to hear. For me, not telling you about the truth isn't right. It's comparable to

seeing you on a sinking ship with no chance of survival, and a lifeboat right next to you. But only I can see the lifeboat, you can't. Why wouldn't I tell you about it? It will save your life. Is there any reason I would choose not to give you the chance to live? No! So why would I hide anything that will save your eternal life? I want to give you the chance to climb aboard the lifeboat.

The first thing I want to say to you is that Jesus loves you. For somebody to be able to give up His perfectly sinless life for a bunch of sinners is just plain astounding. That's a lot of love, and we can't even comprehend it. God gave up His *ONLY* son so that we could have eternal life. Now that is the most powerful love out there—God's love for you!

I pray that you will allow our loving Savior to control your life. He is all-knowing and knows what is best for you! When you watch a sports game from the stands, it's easy to see the "right play." It's easy to say that "this person is open," or "if only you had done that, this would have happened." However, sometimes when you are playing, your vision gets a little clouded. It's hard to see the whole picture. Oftentimes you rely on a coach who can see more of what's going on to help you. That coach has more experience in the game and has your best interest in mind.

Well, the way I see it, life is my game, and God is my coach. He's the most knowledgeable one out there! He can see everything that's going on, and what is more, He knows everything that will happen, as well. Many times you think about being able to go back and change the way you did things after they happen. If you had known the effect of one of your actions, maybe you would have changed it. Well, God already knows. He has the full "scouting report" for life's game. Use it. Use Him. Give God the reins on your life. I promise you won't regret it. It's not often somebody gives up the chance to be coached by the best. Don't give up this chance on the ultimate coach in life. See the lifeboat. Climb aboard, friends, climb aboard.

Love, Kristin

(Haugen is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.)



Kristin Haugen



TrueU

boot camp sessions focus on apologetics

journal by brady arneson

Session No. 1

In this first session, Dr. Stephen Meyer introduced us to the big questions. Does God exist? Who is God? Is the Bible reliable? Is there purpose? He got us thinking about our own faith and if we are really as prepared to defend it as we think we are. He said that people hate believing something because the Bible says so or they are told to, so we should approach them with evidence and reason.

Session No. 2

We learned that the most important question our world-view needs to answer is, "What is the thing from which everything else comes?" ... The universe came into existence, so it must have a cause outside of itself, and what better explanation is there for the creation of our magnificent universe than God?

Session No. 3

Here's where TrueU gets really confusing. I guess our universe has always been expanding like it is right now, ... but I'm not going to get into that because it went right over my head. But what I did learn can be summed up by what Dr. Meyer said. "If you're talking about the origin of space and time itself, you need something that exists outside of space and time." I suppose that makes sense, since space and time cannot create themselves.

Session No. 4

Intelligent design actually has lots of legitimate evidence to account for the creation of the universe. The conditions for life to exist in our universe and on Earth are very precise, so how were those conditions met? Some people think that universes are constantly being made by a universe-making machine and ours just happened to end up livable. ... That still brings up the same question of what makes the universe-making machine?

Session No. 5

... Some scientists make complete fools of themselves by the things they say to take God out of the picture. Dr. Meyer gave us four questions we should ask our teachers ... What do you mean by what you are saying? How do you know it's true? What difference does it make on your life? What if you're wrong? I'm sure I can get some teachers really thinking with these questions.

Session No. 6

Some scientists accept the chance hypothesis, which is the



belief that the amino acids that link together to form human life are randomly connected. ... You can either believe that an intelligent designer created our amino acids perfectly in this precise way, or it was a random chance.

Session No. 7

Let's say you're at the beach, you look at the sand, and there are rocks lined up that clearly spell your name. What is your first thought? Is it that someone must have written your name with the rocks, or the waves must have done it randomly? The first one makes more sense. I think we all agree that information always comes from an intelligent source.

Session No. 8

The fossil record shows many groups of complex animals appearing at the same time during what is known to some scientists as the Cambrian Explosion. This contradicts Darwin's theory of evolution because for his theory to be true there would need to be a gradual appearance of fossils over time. With ... the growing understanding of creationism fitting into science, the hypothesis that God created the universe is more respectable than ever.

Session No. 9

Without God there are no morals. Materialists believe ethics are purely relative, and they are merely personal preferences. So if there is no moral standard and people can do whatever they feel is right for them, you can't punish anyone because there is no wrong.

Session No. 10

Relativists believe that if people think differently, then they have different values. But there is a problem with this. Just because people disagree doesn't mean there isn't absolute truth. If I think two plus two equals four, but you think it equals five, the right answer is still four. ... Like my Boot Camp counselor Tim Walker says, "If someone tells you there's no absolute truth, ask them if they're absolutely sure."

Arneson is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn. TrueU is DVD-based apologetics curriculum from Focus on the Family

In practice

by abbie carlson

It had been a week after Boot Camp, and I was getting on a train to visit some friends. I was a little nervous to not be sitting by my sister, but I smiled and said hello to the young man next to me. He began talking to me and I noticed his accent. He was French and had come to the U.S. to travel and learn.

During the five-hour train ride, we began sharing many things about ourselves. He told me he lived for himself. Somehow I told him with ease about how I lived for God. He believed people are basically good, and I believe people are basically bad—every single one. The look on his face at that moment was a good one. He clearly had never heard anyone say that before. I told him my reasons, about Adam and Eve, about sin, and gave him real life examples.

People are selfish. We agreed on that much. I told him how selfishness leads to hurting other people, and it is wrong to live for self. There have to be rules, and someone to say what is right and wrong. He said that in life you need to do what feels right. I said, “What if it feels right to murder someone?”

Basically, everything I learned at Boot Camp ended up being intertwined in our conversation.

I could see the wheels in his brain were turning. He was a very intelligent person, and I was so excited to know I was making him think. Earlier,

he told me he didn’t like to think about God or about his life purpose, I think because he didn’t have all the answers. Because of that, I made sure I wasn’t preaching to him. I shared without fear, and remembered from the “Friend to Friend” study that people do want to hear about God.

I knew he was genuinely interested in what I had to say because he asked a lot of questions. While he didn’t necessarily agree with me, he wanted to hear my opinion and what I had to say. He told me he had never spoken to anyone who thought the things I thought. I felt so incredibly blessed to be able to speak to him!

I know that every single video I watched at Boot Camp was worth it. Everything I learned was for a purpose. God has His purpose for everything we learn in life. We need to be willing to let God teach us, and ask Him to use us, because when we ask, He answers. He definitely used me and spoke through me, giving me the words to say. I could not have done that without Him, and He used Boot Camp to equip me.

Carlson is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.



Already
gone

by jerrell hein

“Jerrell, it’s time to go. Sunday School starts at 9:30!” exclaimed Dad as he threw on his coat and headed for the door. I gagged as I wrestled with my top button, slid into my black dress shoes, and scooped up my Bible as I followed him to the Buick in the driveway.

As I dropped into the back seat and placed my Bible on my lap, I thought to myself, “I like Sunday school alright. But the Bible ... I’m not so sure I can trust it, especially after our last science class on fossils at school.”

My story was and is not unusual for an American teenager in a church-going family. A recent survey funded by the ministry Answers in Genesis (AIG) found that almost two-thirds of all teens who regularly attend church stop going in their 20s. One surprising result was that 45 percent of those who leave church already have significant doubts about Christianity while in middle school, another 45 percent begin to doubt seriously in high school, and only the remaining 10 percent develop doubts in college. In other words, before most children in Christian families leave home their hearts are already gone from the Christian faith of their parents. If these trends continue, the American church can expect to decline to a small fraction of the population in the next two generations, as has already happened in England where 1,500 churches have been closed in the last 40 years and only 2.5 percent of the population now attends a Bible-believing church.

While investigating the underlying reasons for this mass departure of 20-somethings from the church, AIG surveyors found that belief in the authority, accuracy, and historicity of the Bible was the number one predictor of the path young adults will take. For example, 70 percent of those who left the church and gave a reason said that doubts about the biblical creation and flood accounts were a significant cause for their departure. Interestingly, the survey indicated that music style was not a major factor in their decision to leave. Also, an unexpected finding was that those who regularly attended Sunday school were actually less likely to believe that the Bible was trustworthy.

Based on the survey results, Ken Ham, CEO of AIG, has concluded in his book *Already Gone* (www.masterbooks.net) that radical changes are needed to train our children in a way that will keep them solid in their faith. He points out that young people have come to think that the Bible is good for stories, but that in school they learn the “real stuff” of the world they live in. This is really not

surprising given that 90 percent of churchgoing teens are taught a humanist, evolution-based, billions-of-years-old history of the universe in their academics. He emphasizes that children must be taught the Bible’s trustworthiness in earthly things (history, geography, geology, etc.) so that young people will trust it concerning heavenly things (the gospel, relationships, morals).

Ham exhorts those directing Sunday schools to de-emphasize Bible stories and entertainment, and instead focus on teaching the Bible as real history. The AIG ministry has teaching resources for Sunday school, home instruction, and VBS that help address this need. Ham also points out that Christian education needs to teach apologetics—directly addressing and answering questions that young Christians are being challenged with in our secular humanist culture. He calls on parents to take action in directing their children’s education to ensure that the children are taught the Bible as true history consistent with true science, and that they are taught answers to the questions with which they are being challenged.

The good news is that many 20-somethings who have left the church are interested in coming back, if they can find there the answers for which they are looking. AIG’s survey indicated that a simple invitation from a friend or relative is the most likely reason someone who has stopped meeting with the church will come back and visit. As a result, Ham encourages older believers to engage young people to build the relationships that can make the difference in maintaining or restoring their faith. Finally, the survey indicated that for all believers, established or returning, it is Bible study combined with meditation on how to apply the Word of God to our personal lives that is the most effective means for spiritual growth.

When I was 28 years old, married with three children, and employed as an engineer, I settled into my living room recliner and flipped on the table lamp next to me. I stared at the cover of the small paperback “creation science” book I had been given a few days earlier by my brother-in-law. As I opened it and began to read, deep-seated questions I had carried from my teenage years began to be addressed: “How can the Bible say the earth is young when scientists say that it is billions of years old?” “How can the Bible be true if evolution is a proven fact?” “Is there really any evidence for a global flood?” One by one as the questions were addressed, I began to experience a rekindling of the faith I remembered from my childhood. I pondered, “It’s time to visit a church again this Sunday.”

Hein, from San Marcos, Texas, is the husband of Wanda and the father of nine children. He is currently attending AFLTS.

entrusting to the FAITHFUL

The tropical storm clouds were rolling in and it looked like we were going to be rained out. Four missionaries had attempted to show the Jesus film here before, but none had succeeded—either the equipment had failed or they had been rained out. This time, the forces of darkness were still not happy and the billowing thunderheads kept rolling in. We continued to pray. Someone tripped on the power cord and jerked it out of the generator—the film ground to a halt. After reconnecting the wires, the projector would not turn on. But after laying our hands on it and praying, it fired up again. The storm was close enough now that we could see the rain in the distance as the lightning lit up the sky. We continued to pray as we had been for weeks that the gospel message would be preached in full. For two hours the storm stayed just outside of town, threatening, but never interfering. The gospel was presented that night and the following Sunday 17 people publicly professed faith as a result of that Jesus Film showing.

Over the past four years, Jesse Long and I have been living and working in Tanzania as short-term assistants with AFLC World Missions. We often went on weekend ministry trips like these where we show the Jesus Film, teach seminars and preach. But our main task was teaching at Waama Bible School, a three-year, post-elementary school for adult lay pastors who want to learn more about the Bible.

We first came to Tanzania on a one-year agreement but ended up staying for four years. We came to love our job and students and found it difficult to leave, especially when our co-workers and students started begging us to stay another year. We were torn between the pull to stay and meet a felt need, and the desire to see them self-sufficient, not dependent on missionaries.

Throughout history, missionaries have faced the same challenge—not wanting to leave their mission field. After investing heavily of themselves and forming a close bond with the people, place, and work, it is understandable that it would be difficult. Unfortunately, many times another factor comes into play—the missionaries realize that they have built their ministry around themselves and they cannot leave or their work will implode.

The Apostle Paul took great pains to not fall into this trap. Even though Paul was often clearly called to a mission field (e.g. the “Macedonian Call” in Acts 16:9-10), he never remained in one place for more than three years. To do this, Paul adopted the strategy of “entrusting [the gospel] to faithful men who would be able to teach others” (II Timothy 2:2). Paul never built his missionary work around himself, but was constantly teaching and entrusting the ministry to capable men. Consequently, he could leave at any time, even suddenly, and the ministry would not crumble in his absence. A perfect example is when Paul went to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He preached for only three Sabbaths before he was forced to flee. Even Paul feared that



nothing would come of his ministry there, so he sent Timothy to “learn about [their] faith” (I Thessalonians 3:5) and not only found Christians, but a vibrant, growing church. The ministry had not been built around Paul and had thrived in his absence, even in spite of severe persecution.

Many missionaries today delay departing because the locals “aren’t ready.” Never in Acts do we find Paul leaving a mission field where the locals felt equipped or ready for Paul to leave. In fact, usually they were begging and pleading for Paul to stay. The most touching example is when Paul gave his farewell to the Ephesian elders. They met him on the beach where they all wept and said their good-byes (Acts 20:36-38). Then Paul knelt on the beach with them and prayed, entrusting them to the Lord. Paul knew that the only thing these new believers really needed to “be ready” was genuine faith, prayer, periodic advice, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. Once he entrusted them into the loving arms of their Heavenly Father, Paul moved on.

Paul always made a point of equipping, entrusting, and leaving. When learning to walk, not only must the child overcome his fear, but the parent must let go of the child. So it is with missions. It was not easy to “let Waama go” and force them into self-sufficiency, but we are convinced that is the only loving thing to do.

A special thanks to everyone who financially supported and prayed for Jesse and I over the past four years. The team that gathered around us to enable us to do this ministry was greatly encouraging and truly an indispensable part of our ministry.

Jore will begin his first year at the Free Lutheran Seminary, Plymouth, Minn., this fall.

An emerging canvas

BY BRENDA CARR

My husband and I have been with our new congregation, Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md., for two and a half years now. There is definitely a bittersweet feeling when leaving one congregation and embracing a new one. Moving to a new congregation was like staring at a blank canvas waiting to see the artists' handiwork. Quickly, we realized the canvas was too small and a mural started emerging. We started contemplating how we were going to reach out to all the families around us. Obviously, it wasn't going to happen overnight.

A good starting place was sharing meals together as well as spending time doing fun activities. We started getting to know families personally. It didn't take long before we knew more of their interests, cares, joys and sorrows. A dear friend of ours has always taught her children that family is not just your biological family, but rather those people who live close by you and are there for you in your joys and sorrows. They are the people around you who care about you and walk alongside you. That means if a crisis hits at 3 a.m. my husband is going to go be with the family.

Sometimes a painful long-term situation arises and you commit to walking that long road with them. You spend time together because you want to. You celebrate milestones together, cry together and laugh together. The joys and sorrows of this life are better met when shared with family. Suddenly our mural changes and pops out at us in three dimensions. What a wonderful welcome change this is!

What makes it three dimensions? For all the reaching out we do to families around us, what strikes us more is how many families reach out to us. Our streets run two ways, and that is a blessing for all of us. Our dear friend was absolutely right when she said family are those people right here in our community who care about us and are there for us.

We are all called to love one another. I recently heard a sermon Pastor Paul Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions, preached. He said he is convinced that there are only three things that matter in life. First, who will you serve? Second, what is going to be your eternal address: heaven or hell? Third, who will you take with you? This is simply what life boils down to.

I would encourage you to get out your Bible and read the book of Ecclesiastes, which talks about how everything is meaningless. But in the last chapter, King Solomon writes, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13). Pastor Nash was right: everything is meaningless except building those relationships which lead to people knowing their eternal



destination. Reaching out to families takes time, and you need to be purposeful about it. I hope your purpose for reaching out to other families is simply this, that you can bring them along to your eternal address.

Carr, the wife of Pastor Rich Carr, is a member of Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md.

ARC hosts upcoming retreats

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

• Classics' Retreat

For those 55 years old or older

Dates: Sept. 17-19

Cost: \$75/person, \$130/couple

Speakers: Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson

• Chosen Child Conference

For adoptive families

Date: Nov. 5-7

Speaker: Beth Thomas

• Silent Prayer Retreat

Dates: Dec. 3-4

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.

Online giving now available

To better serve you and maximize stewardship of resources, several departments of the AFLC now offer new options for your financial participation. Online giving is available on the department home pages for Home Missions, World Missions, and AFLBS. Watch for other departments to be adding this option soon.

Online giving options include: secure electronic check; secure debit/credit card; one-time gifts or automatic monthly giving options; donations by phone; easy-to-designate gifts.

People and Places

Pastor Brian Davidson has accepted an interim call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D.

Jerry and Terry Nelson have accepted a call to serve as Parish Builders at **Good Shepherd Free Lutheran**, Camarillo, Calif. The congregation recently purchased a church facility, which will be dedicated Sept. 19.

Pastor Tom Brock has resigned from serving Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

Loyal gleaners

BY JOAN CULLER

The adult Sunday school class at St. Paul's has a name. They're called the "Loyal Gleaners." When I asked some of our older members how the class got this name nobody could tell me. Our congregation is more than 180 years old, so the beginning of the class and the origin of its name have been lost. All anybody could say with certainty was that the class was once a women's Sunday school group.

Being a curious person, I had to try to get into the heads of these early women, and understand *why* we were loyal gleaners. As women studying the Bible, I think they would naturally have been drawn to the book of Ruth. Ruth was most certainly loyal. She left home and family to care for her mother-in-law, Naomi, and serve Naomi's God. And she was a gleaner. She followed behind the harvesters and picked up any stalks of grain they missed. Through her diligence and good stewardship, she and Naomi were able to survive during tough times. She was indeed a "loyal gleaner," and I believe the women who founded our class wanted to emulate her: they wanted to be faithful daughters of the church.

This tradition of gleaning continues as weekly we meet and "glean" the Scriptures, trying to carefully consider every grain of wisdom and how it applies to our daily lives. We are gleaners in other ways, too. Each Sunday we take up a small collection. This is over and above what members give weekly to the congregation. Our donations are not large, but they mount up and are usually given to a special need: snacks for vacation Bible school, a mission trip, a new copier for the church office. When I recently returned from the AFLC conference and expressed my concern for our Parish Education Department—which is understaffed and struggling to prepare materials for publication—the class responded willingly to my suggestion we make a donation.

I know that our AFLC, like many other worthy organizations, is encountering difficult financial times. However, I also know there are a host of "loyal gleaners" in our congregations. I challenge all of our loyal gleaners to pray and ask God where and how they can support the missions of the AFLC.

Culler is a member of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran, Hagerstown, Md.





BOLD: Plan would eliminate ARC debt

BY ALAN BEHM

A young woman, heavily pierced, dressed in black with jewelry that chained her ears to her neck, was on her knees in tears asking Jesus into her life after an ARC Side X Side session. A broken man—lost in sin, afraid and hurting—fled to the ARC and into the care of Christian staff where he sought and found the path back to his Lord. As a visitor, I have stood on the ARC grounds and listened to four different groups preaching the Word, each in its own tongue, while souls were set afire for the Lord.

These and hundreds of other stories of lives given to the Lord are the core purpose for the existence of the Association Retreat Center. The Holy Spirit moves and works in the renovated buildings of this old Air Force radar base located near Osceola, Wis. Newcomers often comment that they sense the presence of the Holy Spirit as they come here for the first time. Others of us return again and again to recharge, refresh, and strengthen our faith.

The ARC invites all to “come away and rest a while.” The beautiful grounds, comfortable lodging, and excellent food encourage rest, but the Lord is always at work with those who come. A week, weekend, or just a day of wrestling with the flesh while God works His miracles on stubborn souls is exhausting. But the peace and strength poured into a soul by the Spirit allows His children to return to the world, ready to live for Him.

The ARC is ready to do more in the fields that are white unto the harvest. However, it has a bank mortgage that siphons away more than \$50,000 a year in interest. The money was borrowed years ago after prayerful deliberation during years of expansion.

Members of the ARC board would rather cut staff than raise the prices beyond reach for churches and individuals who want to come for refreshing. But since I have observed that the staff works above capacity, cutting staff would not be a reasonable option.

Think for a moment about what the Lord could do with that extra \$50,000 every year for His work instead of paying interest.

The ARC Board and Corporation members have prayerfully formulated a plan to eliminate the \$668,000 mortgage as part of the 2010 BOLD (Believing Our Lord Delivers) Mortgage Reduction Campaign. The core of the campaign is to provide donors with a piece of the mortgage in exchange for a \$1,000 gift. (Of course, any gift, large or small, will be gratefully welcome.) Lord willing, the mortgage will be paid off by Dec. 31. In January we hope to invite all owners of a piece of the mortgage to the ARC for a mortgage burning celebration during the AFLC Pastors Conference.

If you find yourself staggered by the size of the mortgage, think of it this way: It could be paid off if each member of the AFLC gives less than \$20. Your gift could be the one that helps a young person come to camp and hear about Jesus for the first time. You could be the one who provides the funds to help a broken spirit find rest and peace in the Lord during a visit to the ARC. Maybe you know someone with a heart for the Lord who can prayerfully provide a significant gift to the mortgage elimination campaign. Maybe Sunday school classes, or youth groups, or men’s groups, or women’s groups could unite to pay a piece of the mortgage.

Experience the ARC for yourself. Visit, attend a camp, request the well-made DVD about the ARC’s mission to show to your congregation, encourage understanding of the Lord’s work at the ARC, and awaken awareness of the financial needs. Corporation members are eagerly waiting for invitations to visit your congregation to explain the ARC mission and the mortgage elimination need.

Behm, a member of the ARC Corporation and Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis., writes on behalf of the ARC Board, Corporation, and ARC Development Committee.



A group of 85 students registered for the Summer Institute of Theology, which was held Aug. 2-6 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Several classes were offered, including "Studies in the Gospel of John," taught by Pastor Phil Haugen; "Studies in Joshua," taught by Pastor Martin Horn; "Biblical Marriage Counseling," taught by Pastor Robert Lee; "Biblical Theology of Persecution," taught by Dr. Ray Ballmann; and "Our Lutheran Confessions," taught by Dr. Francis Monseth.

Stendal was pastor's wife, church organist

Christine Stendal, 100, wife of the late Pastor Karl Stendal, died July 28.

Born April 27, 1910, she was the daughter of John and Laura (Berg) Johnson. She married Karl in 1940. He preceded her in death.

She taught public school for 10 years before marriage. They served in Lutheran Free Church and Association Free Lutheran Congregations throughout the Upper Midwest and Montana, where she often served as a church organist.

Surviving are three sons, Dean Stendal, David (Sharon) Stendal, and Paul Stendal; five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The service was July 31 at Hope Free Lutheran, Wyoming, Minn.



New Members were received August 1 at Grace Free Lutheran Church, Valley City, N.D. They include, (first row, from left) Kris and Delmere McLean, Dan and Nancy VanBruggen, Ameila and Catherine Meester; (second row) Betty Hiatt, Doris and Jim Doris Sanden, Marlen Meester; (third row) Duane and JoAnne Wetch, Tom Meester; (back row) Anne and Duane Haga, Pastor Steve Mundfrom. Not pictured are Sarah Meester, Duane and Jean Hedland.

FLY 2011 • JULY 4-9
ESTES PARK, COLO.

IT IS WRITTEN

JOHN 20:30-31

BY JACOB FEDJE

Fall is just around the corner, and for many of us it's already here. Youth groups are kicking off their new year, students are excited to be back to school, and plans for next year's summer vacation are already taking shape. It's a perfect time to begin preparing for FLY 2011!

The Lord has used the FLY convention to draw students to Himself for many years, and we are excited to see Him work in the hearts of those who will attend July 4-9, 2011. Similar to years past, youths will have the chance to encounter Christ, be challenged in their daily walk with Him, and be encouraged in their faith through fellowship with a multitude of other young people from all across the United States and Canada.

To provide opportunity for this growth, each student will hear from a variety of people on a host of relevant topics and discussion during the morning studies, breakout electives and evening services. During FLY 2011, we are fortunate to have a great team of preachers and teachers who are willing to be used by Christ in proclaiming the truths revealed in the written Word.

Each morning at camp, AFLC Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt (Onalaska, Wis.) will lead the junior high campers, and AFLC Pastor Brett Boe (Dalton, Minn.) will lead senior high students through portions of God's Word. It is our prayer that through this time, students will continue to desire and learn to study the Scriptures on a personal level as they work through the week with these teachers.

Evenings are spent with time in worship through music, testimony and continued study of the Bible. The evening speakers at FLY 2011 will include AFLC Pastors Brian Ricke (Arlington, S.D.), Dana Coyle (Newark, Ill.), Eric Westlake (Zumbrota, Minn.), and Todd Erickson (Maple Grove, Minn.) as well as speaker Chris Rosebrough. Concerned and devoted to reaching others with the truth, these men of God will share the Word with students so they may "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in His name" (John 20:31). For more information regarding the speakers at FLY, please visit www.aflc.org/youth/fly.

So what are you doing to prepare for FLY 2011? Youth workers and advisors, expect to receive the FLY informational packet (sent to each church office) later this month. Included in this mailer will be the new FLY informational DVD for you to share with the students and parents in your congregation, as well as information on registration deadlines, forms, housing, and brochures. Much of this information is also detailed on the FLY Web site. For those who may not be attending the convention, you can still have an impact on the lives of the students in your congregations. Please join the many who have already begun to lift this convention to the Lord in prayer.

Fedje is the treasurer of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee.

Letter to the editor

It may very well be time for us in our congregations to go back to the old youth work pattern that was done a few years ago.

When we had Luther League, as it was called and is called in many of our congregations, we used to have the youth elect a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and a devotional life secretary. We did this in order to teach youths how a congregation is to operate and conduct business. Some congregations even had a youth elected to meet with the church council and to be involved in other boards and committees. This gets youths involved and even excited about the Lord's work. Also, they will own their own program.

The districts had leadership training schools where the students learned what their position was all about. We even had leadership schools for the presidents where they learned how to carry out what they were elected to do.

In my youth days we would meet together as youths alone and then we would meet together with parents and other interested members and friends of the congregation. I notice a number of our congregations still calling their youth group

Luther League. Excellent idea. This is good because perhaps many of our youths do not know who Martin Luther was. Some think that it [refers to] Martin Luther King Jr. rather than the reformer.

We were taught why we were Lutherans and strongly urged to remain faithful to Lutheran teachings and Lutheran ways. Not a bad idea today. We seem to have many who leave the Lutheran Church, even our AFLC, showing a lack of concern for Bible doctrine and practice.

It seems to me that we are busy following all kinds of fad type of programs rather than that which will benefit the local congregation and youths themselves. Fads are usually not too Lutheran and cause a drifting away from the biblical truths we have in the Lutheran faith.

A few years ago, when I was at Green Lake Free Lutheran in Spicer and Zion Free Lutheran in Willmar, Minn., one of my interns asked what he should do in the youth program. The answer was clear: "love them and teach them." Is not that a good thing for us to do? This is really the best way to work with youths. Students need to know they are special in God's eyes and in yours. One pastor had his youth

director call every young person on the phone so they received a personal invitation to attend every meeting. It paid dividends. The youth program grew rapidly because of the personal involvement of the director.

Now, you pastors—you need to be involved with your youth. You can turn certain things over to others but you must at least attend and show interest in your students. They need you more than you think. And do not say you are too old. It has always been my opinion that you soon do not know or understand youth culture even when you are a few years out of high school or college. It moves so fast. So, us older people are on pretty equal footing with those who are younger.

Getting your youth to be part of the local congregation is a must. This is how we disciple them in a positive way.

I am not an expert on youth work. I just wanted to share a few thoughts on it. May the Lord bless His work among our youth. And, do not forget to evangelize them so they consciously know Jesus Christ as their Lord and live for Him.

Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.

Evangelism grant will develop one-minute radio spots

The AFLC Commission on Evangelism took on a new project this summer, funding the development of one-minute radio spots that will feature real-life stories of people sharing their faith.

Under the direction of AFLTS student Marcus Dahl, the project will include the collection of a catalog of stories that will be hosted on a Web site. Each one-minute story will be downloadable and usable for

sermons, radio spots, etc. The program will also promote AFLC ministries.

For more information on this project, or to submit a personal story, contact Marcus Dahl at marcus.dahl@yahoo.com.

AFLC memorials: July

AFLBS

Palmer Haugen (2)
Diane Pester
Robert Hankey (3)
Soren & Helene Engevik

AFLTS

Kermit Haakenson (2)
Palmer Haugen (4)
Darline Hertenstein (2)
Richard Hinderaker

General Fund

Roy & Thelma Berg
Palmer Haugen
Theodore Bouchard
Richard Hinderaker

Home Missions

Palmer Haugen

Parish Education

Pastor John Strand
Palmer Haugen
Marvin Aho

World Missions

Palmer Haugen
Beatta Gilbertson

... in honor of

World Missions

Jeremiah Jore

HIS Fund

Ray Klug

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-July 31, 2010

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$28,753	\$190,623	\$186,901
Evangelism	6,713	76,018	52,914
Youth Ministries	11,295	87,254	53,586
Parish Education	9,527	68,499	61,783
Seminary	17,665	121,129	105,979
Bible School	50,658	281,817	228,353
Home Missions	21,362	252,546	181,361
World Missions	22,430	162,066	137,185
Personal Support	32,872	185,755	230,072
TOTALS	\$201,273	\$1,425,706	\$1,238,134

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

The weed of rebellion

A couple of years ago we decided part of the landscaping on our church property needed a makeover. Our plan was to remove all the shrubbery that was there and plant grass and a tree. We got a crew together and worked hard at pulling out all the old roots. We were confident we had gotten them all. It was ready for new grass seed. We planted good seed and expected to see nothing but grass growing, with a tree in the middle.

Not long after the grass started popping up, a big ugly weed shot up as well. We had done all we could to keep it out, but it got in there anyway.



Pastor Craig Johnson

The same kind of thing happens in young lives. Parents and congregations do all they can to keep the weeds out. They are careful about what the little eyes see and the little ears hear. But sometimes inappropriate words come out of their little mouths. Their little hearts desire things that are not good for them. How did those weeds get in?

Some weeds were already there. Nobody starts out as pure soil. The little baby looks innocent and sweet, but the Bible says, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5, NIV). We start out with the weeds of sin and self-centeredness already planted within us. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

A nice lawn and garden takes work. Somebody needs to pay attention to it. If you leave your lawn and landscaping alone and just let it grow up whatever way it wants, it usually doesn’t result in something that makes the cover of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

It is the same with people. We start out heading the wrong way because of our sinful nature. A person will continue on that path, and become like a plot of ground full of weeds, unless there is proper teaching and attention given. Often after a child is baptized in our congregations the pastor says, “We believe that God gives the gift of faith in baptism, but that this gift will be lost unless the child is taught the Word of God, upheld by prayer and given a Christian example to follow.” Undesirable things will grow in a life if there isn’t proper spiritual care. The weeds keep growing. You have to keep pulling them.

When we see a weed pop up in the life of a young person we have tried to point to Jesus, it is tempting to wonder what we did wrong. No parent, no pastor, no youth worker, no congregation is perfect. Sometimes, even after they have done the best they can in caring for a young soul, the weeds of rebellion and disobedience still arise.

It is humbling to admit we can’t keep all the weeds out of a young person’s life. Our influence can be significant, but it is limited. Children aren’t vending machines—we aren’t guaranteed what will

come out if we hit a specific button.

The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel was told to go to the people and “Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them” (Ezekiel 2:4-5). The Lord didn’t tell

No parent, no pastor, no youth worker, no congregation is perfect. Sometimes, even after they have done the best they can in caring for a young soul, the weeds of rebellion and disobedience still arise.

Ezekiel, “If you do it right, they’ll respond in obedience.” Ezekiel’s responsibility was to share God’s Word. God didn’t promise everyone would listen. He wasn’t going to hold Ezekiel responsible for the results. What He expected of Ezekiel was faithfulness.

The Lord does not expect Christian parents to have perfect children. Our congregations have not failed in His eyes if sometimes we have a young person who wanders away. What God is looking for most is faithfulness. He wants us to be faithful in loving Him, loving the kids He brings into our lives and sharing with them the great love of Jesus.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

something to share

My dearest treasure

BY AMBER DAHL

I'm moving again. This is the fourth time in eight years, and I'm finding boxes that were never opened from the last move. I decided to de-clutter and sell things I haven't used in the past three years. During my garage sale, I watched things I once considered treasures now being sold for pennies on the dollar. As people walked away with "my" stuff in their hands, I actually began to feel a curious sense of freedom. How strange! A few people told me that this was the best sale they'd ever been to, but what they didn't know was it helped me feel unencumbered by stuff.

When do our possessions begin to possess us? I'm not sure, but it is a question I've pondered since the sale. As my husband and I slowly move the rest of our things to our new house across town, I realize with each trip my heart is slowly finding itself more at home in my new house than my old house. As our possessions fill up the new house, the old house becomes an empty shell instead of home.

Jesus said that we should "sell our possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).

We could view this as an obligation we should do because Jesus said so, yet when I remember the freedom I felt at my garage sale I see this verse quite differently. Instead of an obligation, selling or giving can be a way to release our earthly ties and bind our hearts to heaven. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34).

Author and evangelist Billy Graham writes in June 2010 *Decision* magazine, "There is nothing wrong with people possessing riches. The wrong comes when riches possess people. If God has given you more than your neighbors around you, dedicate your possessions to Christ, and realize that you are only a steward of what God has given you—and someday you will have to give an account for every penny you have spent. The IRS wants to know how you spend your money, but that is nothing compared to the books God is keeping!"

Jesus asked the wealthy, religious rulers, "If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you true riches?" (Luke 16:11)

What a sobering thought! If I will not occasionally give away or sell my earthly goods, will I *really* find the strength to share with others Jesus, my Heavenly Treasure? There is no greater treasure than Jesus.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
my dearest treasure, the light of His smile,
seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

("Living For Jesus" lyrics by: T. O. Chisholm)

Dahl, who is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., volunteers in a ministry at a women's prison.