

THE LUTHERAN 
AMBASSADOR

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*Nurturing
new
LIFE*

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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ENCOURAGING Word

Meet them where they are

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and lo, I am

with you always, even to the end of the age."

Many times reading these verses, we think we should rush out and start quoting Scripture to everyone. Actually, these

verses are more of a call to listen to others and be a friend. In the parables of our Lord, Jesus used situations and circumstances around Him to begin to teach about eternal life. He met the people in their circumstances. He applied God's teachings to what was taking place in their lives.

From 1992 to 1993, I served my residency as a chaplain at the North Dakota State Hospital. I remember knocking on the door of a patient, a young woman who was suffering from schizophrenia. When I entered the room, I introduced myself as the chaplain.

She said, "If you're here to talk about religion, I don't want to talk to you."

"I'm here to be a friend," I responded.

She invited me in and proceeded to talk non-stop for 45 minutes. We met regularly, and as she learned to trust me, she told me her life story. She had been sexually abused and betrayed. As she talked, God opened

windows of opportunity to bring in the teachings of Christ. This woman needed to hear of God's love and acceptance of her. She needed to hear how Christ loved her so much that He died upon the cross for her sins. God opened her heart because someone took the time to listen. His Word applied to her life situation.

Evangelism is more than quoting Scripture. Evangelism is being a friend who takes time to listen and even cry with someone as they pass through the trials and tribulations of this life. It is an opportunity of ministry for all of us. Sometimes our best evangelism efforts are sitting quietly with someone. Christ can shine through His people even when they are silent.

Sometimes I think we worry that we might say the wrong things or we feel like we don't know what to say. It's at times like these that we need to return to what Jesus said: "All power and authority have been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). It's not an issue of what we can do. It's a statement of what God can do through a willing servant. It's a trusting relationship with God that will provide the words at the appropriate time. It's Christ who saves souls.

As Christians, we have the opportunity to be instruments used by God to touch lives by His power and love. He uses a variety of ways, and He calls us to be open to His leading. May we be open to His voice, His Word and His guidance as He leads us into opportunities for evangelism.

May God bless you as you serve Him and the people He places before you.



Kerwin Sletto
Ottawa, Ill.

In print for 40 years

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The value of a soul

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?” (Luke 15:4).
...

Our verse for today speaks of the value of one soul — one life — in the eyes of Jesus, for He is the One who told the parable. There will be great joy in heaven, Jesus said, over every sinner who repents. Jesus was talking about the spiritual redemption of a man. This is what He died to accomplish. He gave Himself up for all people of all times. But remember that He gave Himself up for individuals, too, each one precious in His sight and desired by Him.

We know that Christ as the Good Shepherd has great compassion for every lost soul. He has gone back to the Father, having finished the work He came to do here, but He has left to His followers the great mission of bringing sinners to the place of reconciliation. He has called you to go out in search of the lost sheep whom He also desires for His fold.

The lost sheep are not few, as this parable might seem to indicate. Jesus used these terms to illustrate the value of one soul. Actually, the harvest field is great and it is worldwide.

The missing ones are not always far away — comfortably far. Many are near at hand — uncomfortably near. They may be related to someone else, yes. They may seem to be someone else's responsibility, and yet you may be the one who the Lord has tapped on the shoulder to be the seeking shepherd. It is easy to find the eliminating excuse for inaction, but excuses will not do when lives for whom Christ died are at stake. ...

We have spoken as though you are among those who have been found. Perhaps it is not so. And if it is not, then the Lord is seeking you with all of His great love. He knows you and your need. He is able to satisfy the deep longing of your soul. As the Good Shepherd calls out your name, cry out to Him from the thorns and bramble where you are held fast. He will bring you into the safety of the fold, and the angels of heaven will rejoice that you have come. ...

— Pastor Raynard Huglen

Reprinted from *The Lutheran Ambassador*, Feb. 26, 1963



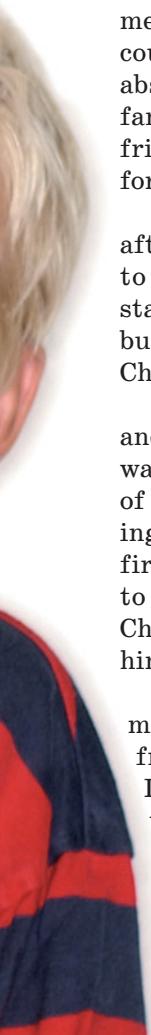
Godly Influence

What Andy Barnum probably looks back on as a seemingly minuscule event, changed my life forever. If it wasn't for his simple invitation to Camp Lebanon, a quaint Bible camp outside of Upsala, Minn., I guarantee I wouldn't be where I am today.

Although I grew up in a church-going family, I heard nothing of salvation through faith, a relationship with Jesus, or even grace for that matter. I was under the assumption that if I was good enough I was as good as gold and had nothing to

worry about. Living miles from town, my choice in friends was quite limited, and I became fast friends with the boys down the road. I developed a far from desirable vocabulary, a bad reputation in school, and had even been exposed to pornography on multiple occasions. Needless to say, I wasn't going in the right direction.

One summer, Andy Barnum invited me to Bible camp. Expecting a week of fun activities and sports, living in a cabin with Andy and a bunch of other crazy boys from around Minnesota, and just being away from my mom sounded like the funnest thing ever. So, naturally, I accepted his invita-



tion. Camp was all I expected and a whole lot more. It was there at camp that I learned of a God who loved me and longed to be with me. I learned how sin had severed our relationship and that Jesus paid the price for my sin. I learned that He was knocking at the door of my heart wanting a relationship with me. At Camp Lebanon, with Andy at my side, I accepted Christ as my Savior for the first time.

I came home a different person, with the attitude that I was going to change the world around me. But being a Christian while stranded in the country with my old friends was not easy. I had absolutely no Christian fellowship. No one in my family was a Christian and my only Christian friend, Andy, lived 20 miles away — impossible for a 10-year-old on his dirt bike.

Andy continued to invite me to camp year after year, and I would always recommit my life to Christ thinking that this year I was going to stand firm. I never did. Every year my fire burned out and I was the same old little punk. Christ was my Savior, but not my Lord.

After fourth grade, my parents got divorced and I moved into town along with my mother. I was given the opportunity to escape my old circle of friends. In sixth grade, God blessed me by placing Jeremy Swenson in my class. Jeremy was the first Christian friend I ever had the opportunity to spend consistent time with. He came from a Christian home, and simply spending time with him and his family helped me grow in my faith.

Over the next two years I was faced with many difficult decisions as the choices my old friends were making became increasingly worse. In seventh grade I made a very conscious effort to remove myself completely from their sphere of influence. They often made fun of me for ditching them and hassled me for being a “goody-two-shoes,” but eventually they got off of my case and saw that I wasn’t going to give in. I remember Jeremy and I often sat at a table by ourselves at lunchtime. If it hadn’t been for Jeremy, I doubt I would have ever escaped my old lifestyle. Over the next few years my circle of Christian friends grew. Eventually, the duo Jeremy and I had grew into a group of 10-20 people who would meet weekly for Bible study.

After high school I came here to Bible school where my number of Christian friends has multiplied. They are certainly an asset that I now know I could not live without.

Andy Barnum will never know how he has impacted my life by his simple invitation more than 10 years ago. If it wasn’t for Andy, only God knows when or if I would have heard the message

of God’s grace. It scares me to think of the decisions I would have made if I didn’t have the Holy Spirit as my guide. Also, if it wasn’t for the simple gift of Jeremy’s friendship in sixth grade and

I will

**Who's gonna care that I've gone astray,
And messed up my life in so many ways?
Who's gonna be there to turn me around,
And help me get up when I've fallen down?**

**I hear in my heart — a clear, gentle voice
— I will!**

**Who's gonna welcome me back home again
After all of the things I've done and said?
Who's gonna show me the right way to live
Once I've confessed all the bad things I did?**

**I hear in my heart — a clear, gentle voice
— I will!**

**Who's gonna help me be like I should,
A loving, kind person who wants to do good?
Who's gonna know that I've hoped for so long
To become part of the family, the family of God?**

**I hear in my heart — a clear, gentle voice
— I will!**

**Who's gonna know that the dream that I have
Is to share Jesus' love everywhere that I can?
Who's gonna give me a new song to sing,
To tell of the love of Jesus our King?
I hear in my heart — a clear, gentle voice
— I will!**

— *Bonnie Lau*
Christ is Lord Free Lutheran
Onalaska, Wis.

on, who knows how long I would have moseyed in my indifference.

God used Andy, Jeremy and others in simple ways to change my life forever. I look forward to seeing all the other people God will bring in my life to challenge and encourage me along the way.

— *Ryan Patenaude*
Crookston, Minn.



Evangelism

It's
our
turn

According to Webster's Dictionary, evangelism is "the preaching or promulgation of the gospel." When we think of evangelism, we tend to associate it with crusades, meetings, and people who are gifted evangelists. But is evangelism limited to the public preaching and promulgation of the gospel? Should evangelism be left only for those who can deliver dynamic messages to mass quantities of people?

Obviously not. Anyone who knows Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has the privilege and obligation of sharing the gospel. In other words, as Christians, we are all evangelists in one form or another. My generation and youths today are no exception.

Jesus Christ came to this earth to show us the way to the Father and to die for our sins. But why? Why did God sacrifice His one and only Son? Christ died so that our relationship with God could be restored. You see, because of Adam and Eve's fall into sin, they, along with every generation after them, face the consequences of that sin — death or eternal separation from God. Thankfully, God was not content to leave His most precious creation in that fallen state. God intervened by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life and then die on a cross. He took upon Himself the punishment that all of humankind deserved. By putting our faith in Christ, our sins are forgiven and our relationship with the Father is restored. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Jesus Christ did not face all of that suffering, torment, and humiliation just for our salvation. God had other plans in mind as well. God also sent His Son to die for us so that we can share this wonderful gospel message with others. This is made very clear in II Corinthians 5:15-21. In verses 15 and 19 it states: "... and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf ... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

First, God forgives sinners through the blood of Christ, and then He gives them the privilege of passing that message of reconciliation on to others. Christ died for us so that we would no longer live for ourselves, but for God. When we give our lives to the Lord, He sends us His Holy Spirit to lead and guide us into His will and to equip us with gifts and abilities to use in spreading the gospel. Every believer has at least one gift to be used with the rest of the body of Christ in order to establish God's kingdom. Does this mean that God is not sovereign? Is God weak and dependent upon humankind to get things done? No, but God chooses to work through His peo-

ple in order to gather more souls for His kingdom. And this can be seen all throughout history from Noah, to the Old Testament prophets, to the Apostles, to believers today. What an awesome responsibility we have as Christians to be sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Did you notice that I said every believer is given gifts and that every believer is called to share the gospel? Well, it's true. People of my generation and the youths of today who know Christ also have the same privilege and responsibility of sharing the love of God through Jesus Christ. Even better, we have unique opportunities to share Jesus with others where "older" people might not.

I'll use myself as an example. I am taking some college courses part-time, I have a part-time job, and I work with the youths of our church. In each of these areas I have unique opportunities to build relationships with people, and through those opportunities, share Christ with them. In class I am able to meet many new people and share my beliefs and convictions with them through class discussion or personal conversation. At work I am able to build strong relationships with my co-workers and witness to them as the opportunities arise. My attitude toward work is also a great witness. When you do your job with a positive attitude and are seeking to glorify God through your work, people notice. With the youth group I am able to relate to the kids and build strong friendships, allowing me opportunities to minister to their needs.

Now does this mean that "older" people have fewer opportunities to share? Not necessarily, they just have different opportunities. My point is that young people have special opportunities to evangelize; we have more spheres of influence in which to share Christ, and we need to take advantage of them. The fact that most people come to Christ before they go off to college goes to show just how important it is for us to share Christ with our peers.

— **Chad Jankord**
Abiding Savior Lutheran
Sioux Falls, S.D.



Pass it on



**A father
sees his
children
take on a
ministry of
evangelism**

When my wife, Sheri, and I were invited to visit Elim Lutheran, a small AFLC church, little did we know what we were about to experience. We were so impressed with the welcome and interest people took in us. And we were hearing and seeing things we had never known before — all this about Jesus and being born again, knowing for sure where we are going when we die, the end times, the antichrist and the mark, about changed lives and about conviction of sin. At Elim, the altar area was used frequently in dealing with issues in people's lives.

Just walking into that church, we could sense something was different there. Soon after joining the church, Sheri and I came to a crossroads in our lives and received Jesus. Twenty-seven years later, our 24- and 22-year-old boys are sharing Jesus with their friends and teaching them how to share Jesus with others.

The question is, "How does that happen?" Do we want our children to fulfill the Great Commission? If you're praying that this would happen, that's a good start, because the Holy Spirit has brought conviction. If not, you will probably never see your children take up evangelism. If you think it is someone else's responsibility, you're greatly mistaken.

To start, read I Peter 3:15, John 15:16, 4:38 and Mark 8:38. Have you considered praying that God would show you the urgency of sharing His Word to someone before you die and stand before Him?

At a recent seminar I attended on relational evangelism, a speaker said that fewer than 10 percent of the people attending churches have opened their Bible and shared the good news of Jesus Christ in the last year! Could that be true in the churches of the AFLC? If it is, what can be done now to change this attitude?

I just taught 30 people in our church a course called "How to Share Jesus Without Fear," yet when our entire congregation was asked, "How many have opened their Bibles and shared with someone in the last year?" only eight responded positively. Let's face it, we have all failed, and we best not take that lightly.

I have been involved in personal evangelism for 27 years, and I still fail. No matter how much I prepare, I still miss opportunities. Brother Ken Pentti, the AFLC evangelist some years ago, asked in one evening service if anyone had any questions about the Christian faith. One question was: "Why is it that most sharing that I have heard outside the church has been from people from the more reformed churches?" That's a good question for us to ask ourselves. One report says that more than 6,200 people a day are dying in the US, most of whom will spend eternity in hell. People around us have eyes but are

blind, have ears but do not hear, have hearts that are keeping them alive but they are walking corpses. Do we really believe that? Or do we think Jesus was just kidding when He said, "Unless they believe in Me they will surely die?" (John 8:21,24; John 3:3).

Sheri and I feel very fortunate to have witnessed the passing of the Great Commission on to our boys and to see them use it. Pastor Richard Anderson trained me by the Word and through his example. He, as well as Pastors Michael Brandt, Michael Crowell, Ken Pentti and Verle Dean, were instrumental in encouraging me to be involved in personal evangelism. This has contributed to passing evangelism on to our boys, because they have seen me share with others and heard about my witnessing experiences. The best teaching is by example.

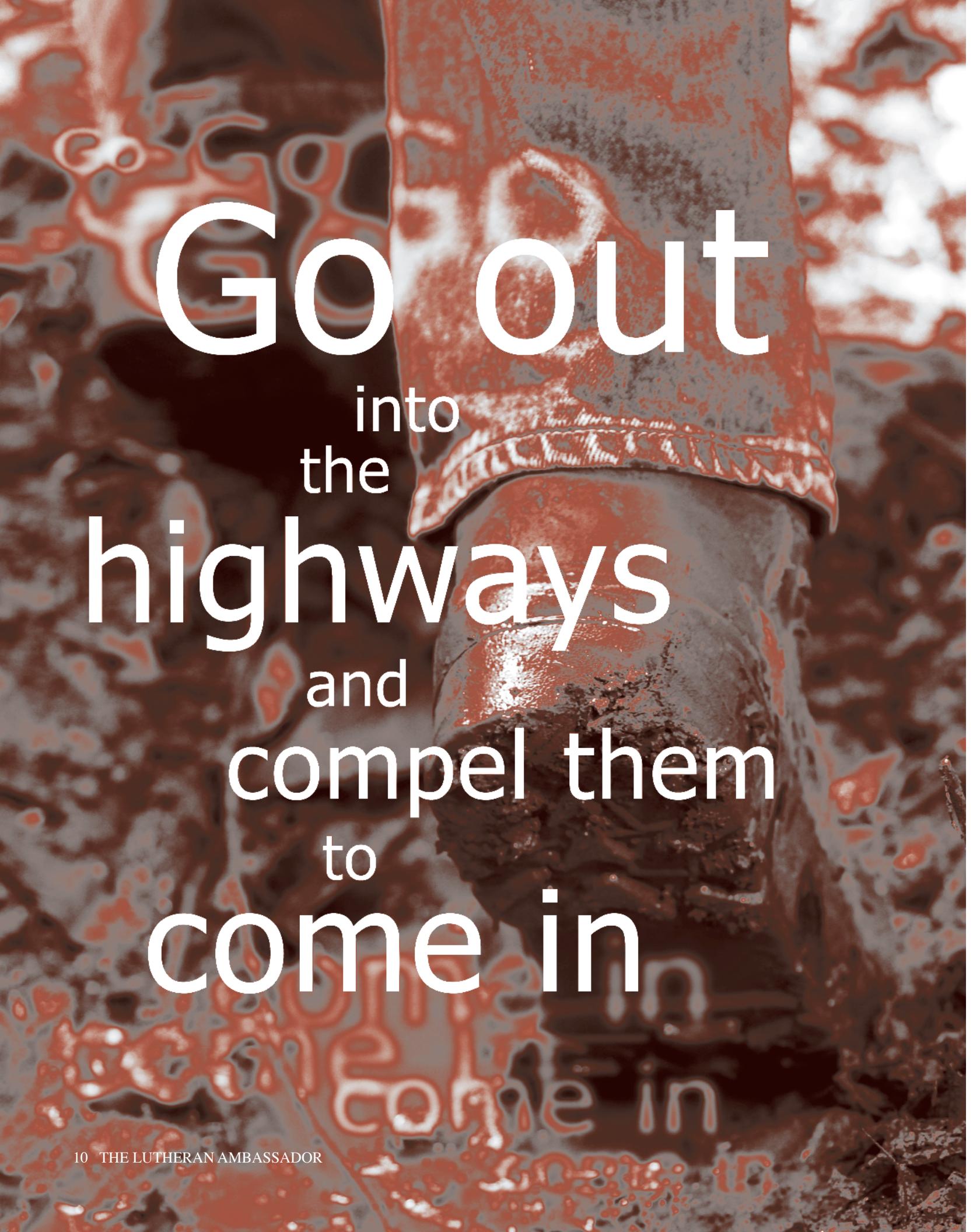
Over the years, our boys have seen firsthand the results of the power of God's Word in opening the eyes of the lost and have seen how exciting sharing our faith can be.

If you're thinking, "Yes, that's fine for you, but I share through example in the way I conduct my life. Furthermore, my church is an example in our community and I park there every Wednesday and Sunday, and my kids and neighbors see that." That's very commendable, and I would encourage you to keep on doing good works — but how are your children going to learn from you how to fulfill the Great Commission if you aren't an example to them in sharing Jesus? Hell is full of people who have counted on good works to earn their way to heaven! What about the gospel of Jesus Christ? The power is in the message.

If you want to make an impact and are interested in wanting your children — teenagers and young adults — in your family to be active in sharing their faith in Jesus Christ, talk to them. Share with them. Tell them of the urgency of sharing. God wishes that none should perish. Talk to your pastor, a deacon or someone in your church for some help. Call Pastor Jim Rasmussen, the AFLC's director of evangelism (763) 545-5631, or email me at: shurloc@gte.net.

— **Jim Larson**
Elim Lutheran
Lake Stevens, Wa.





Go out
into
the
highways
and
compel them
to
come in

Without a doubt, the primary task of the church is to go and make disciples. This process of going involves purposeful activity. In this case the purposeful activity is evangelizing people to trust in Christ and then teaching them to live for and serve Christ. Many call this the Great Commission. Can you imagine what would happen if this commission did not get passed along to the generations? Unfortunately, in far too many cases, that is what is happening in families and congregations across America.

This past October, my congregation had the privilege of hosting a Commission on Evangelism seminar entitled, "Passing On the Baton." It was a fast-paced, six and one-half hour day that included three sessions, each beginning with singing and followed by a small group discussion of the message points.

The first session, presented by Pastor Terry Olson, focused on the history and practice of evangelism in both the AFLC and its predecessor, the Lutheran Free Church. He said that 85 percent of Americans classify themselves as Christians and, yet, only 1 percent believes that evangelism is the most important function of the church. In contrast, our AFLC heritage is rich in the area of evangelism and revival with such examples as the Haugean movement, Johnsonian Awakening, Church Reform Movement and the establishment of Augsburg Seminary. Since the dangers of universalism, liberalism, sacramentalism, legalism, and shallow teaching continue to threaten such an evangelistic emphasis, Olson taught that it is imperative that God's Word remains the foundation of our heritage.

In the second session, Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of FLS, discussed the importance for families and congregations to be bound together in a common conviction and an intentional development of an evangelistic legacy. This legacy must be encouraged in the home by parents and grandparents so that our children and grandchildren will catch such a vision for outreach.

In the third session, Pastor James L. Johnson, dean of AFLBS, focused on four foundational pillars of evangelism that every generation needs to cherish and maintain. These four pillars are prayer, the Word, the Holy Spirit and obedience. Nehemiah was the only one in his day to carry on the baton and lead the wall project. And yet God blessed Nehemiah.

Small group discussions and prayer followed each session and consisted of about eight people assigned to each group to assure a representation from a variety of generations. Every group ranged in age from teens to seniors. Strong application of each session was discussed, and it was good to see several generations come together to pray about an evangelistic emphasis. After all, it only takes one lukewarm

generation to affect many generations.

We have seen what has happened to entire church bodies who have failed to pass on the baton of faith. Many of these no longer accept the Bible as the Word of God. Their children graduate from confirmation and eventually from the church. We are not exempt. What has happened to others will happen to us unless we faithfully and purposefully pass on the heritage of a Word-centered, evangelistic faith.

That kind of faith demands that we reach out to a world dead in its trespasses and sins. Gone are the days when we can expect the world to come to our churches for evangelistic meetings. We live in a day where the church must be prayerfully intentional in going out to meet people where they are. Jesus said in Luke 14:23, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be

filled." To not do so will leave a legacy of apathy. May God forbid!

Hosting the "Passing On the Baton" seminar involved some commitment. As a congregation, we had to secure numerous volunteers to lead small group discussions, serve refreshments and greet guests. Sack lunches, facilities, packets, brochures and flyers had to be

prepared. Mailings had to be sent. Registrations had to be received. Music had to be planned as well as many other things. An AAL grant covered the expenses.

But was it worth it? If only one person catches the conviction and desire to pass on their living faith in Christ to another soul — you tell me, was it worth it? If you, after reading this article, yield to Christ's commission to consciously pass on the baton of a living, active faith to the next generation, was it worth it?

— *Pastor Tim Johnson
Resurrection Free Lutheran
Beltrami, Minn.*



Seeking & Saving



The last recorded words of Jesus, just before his ascension into Heaven are written in Acts 1:7-8: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This command was shared with the first congregation of Jesus Christ — if not directly by Jesus, then by the apostles. This congregation numbered about 120 (Acts 1:15), not too different in size from many congregations of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The members spent much time in prayer (Acts 1:14), and then it happened: Pentecost and 3,000 were saved!

The members of that first congregation were all involved in evangelism, as can be seen by reading the next few chapters of Acts. Why should it be any different today? Is the Holy Spirit no longer available to followers of Jesus? Are passages like Acts 2:38-39; 2:42-47; 4:4; 5:14, 41 and 6:7 no longer valid in the 21st century?

God never meant for it to be different. The Holy Spirit is alive and well, and results like those in the passages above can happen today. God has a purpose for each local congregation today. Jesus said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost," and that task was given through the Great Commission.

Local congregations

How well is your congregation doing? Sure, there are other things that are important in the local congregation like worship, visiting the sick, meeting in small groups, and teaching the children. But they all ought to be done in the context of seeking and saving the lost. Every activity of the local congregation needs to be measured on the basis of

how it will count for eternity, for "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). We, as individuals, were not saved and joined into our local congregations just for our own comfort and benefit, but to be equipped to reach the lost for Christ. How well are you doing?

The pastor's role

Ephesians 4:11-16 says, "It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and

We, as individuals, were not saved and joined into our local congregations just for our own comfort and benefit, but to be equipped to reach the lost for Christ.

become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every kind of wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

It's very clear in this passage that Jesus doesn't give apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to do the work of ministry, but to equip and train God's people to do it. The primary ministry of the local church is to prepare people's hearts to respond to the gospel by witnessing to the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. All of us who are part of a congregation are called to be witnesses.

Evangelism Commission

The Commission exists to help pastors equip the saints of our congregations to be effective witnesses for Jesus to the building up of His kingdom.

We have researched and used tools that are at work in local congregations. A brochure that lists these tools and their sources is available from Pastor Jim Rasmussen, director of evangelism.

We have conducted five "Fishing in the 21st Century" seminars, which exhort us to be witnesses and highlight some of the tools. We can set up this seminar in your district.

We have helped sponsor three "Passing On the Baton" seminars designed to help newer congregations and young people understand the heritage of the AFLC.

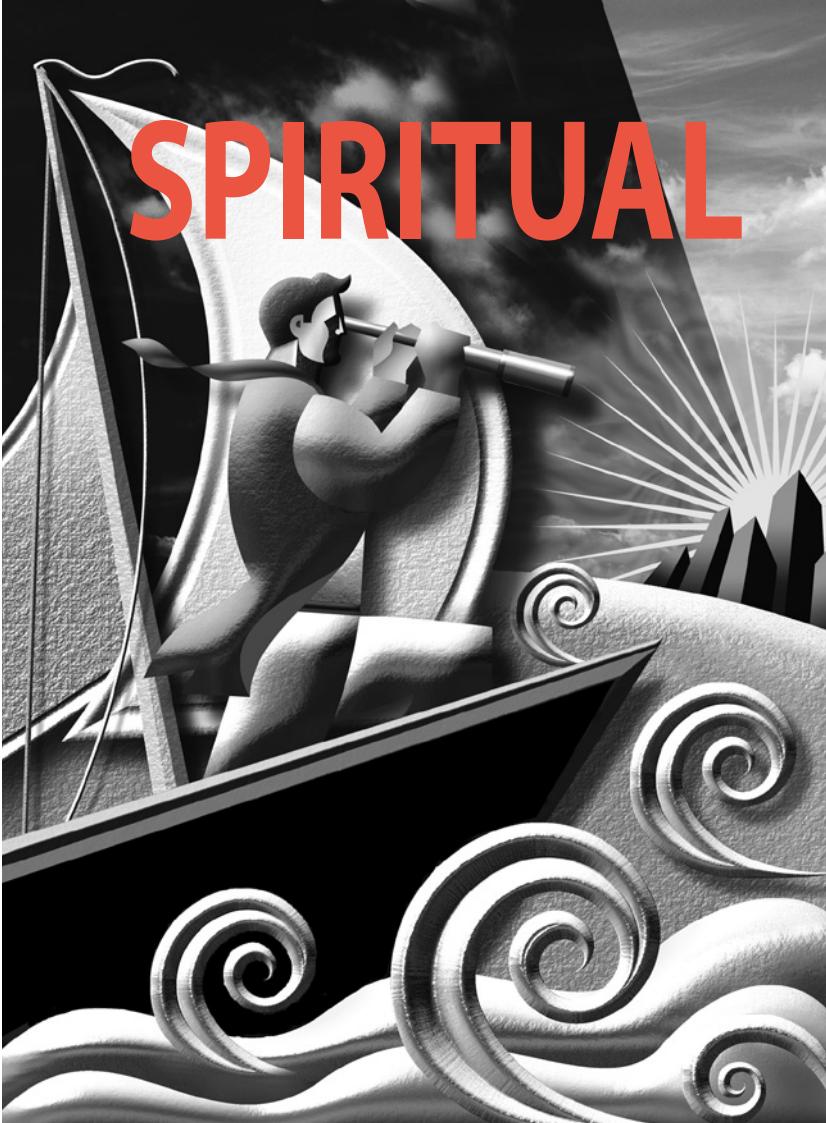
We want to be an encouragement to our pastors, the shepherds of our local congregations, and are sponsoring a gathering of pastors and wives at the 41st Annual Conference on June 10 in Brookings, S.D., the day before the conference begins. Dr. Paul Cedar, chairman of Mission America, will be the speaker.

And now, dear friends, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (Philemon 6).

— **Gene Quist**
Chairman
Commission on Evangelism



SPIRITUAL



How God used a Bible study series to draw one man into a deeper relationship with Him

Unlike some people who have had a definite life occurrence that changed their lives, I have no such story to tell. My transformation occurred slowly over time. I grew up going to church, attending Sunday school and confirmation. I did these things because I had to, not because I wanted to. The seeds were planted, but went dormant.

As I grew older, I drank alcohol, used all the bad language, looked at the wrong magazines and watched the wrong movies.

In 1991 my family joined Victory Free Lutheran Church in Park River, N.D. I believe it was in 1996 that I was appointed to the church council to fill a vacancy. I began evaluating my lifestyle. Was I being the husband I should be? Was I being a positive influence and setting a good example for my kids? Was I conducting myself in

Adventure

the manner a church leader should? The answer to all these questions was a very clear, NO!

I knew that I had to change. But how? Our church hosted a Bible study series called the “Fifty Day Spiritual Adventure.” The title was “What to Do When You Don’t Know What to Do.” I thought, “This is exactly what I need.” So I signed up.

Today, I couldn’t tell you any specific lesson from the study that I learned. Back then God used the study to push me into changing. The seeds planted earlier in life began to germinate. Through my pastor, Jim Rasmussen, I heard about an organization called Promise Keepers. Around this same time, a friend of mine, Greg, asked me, “Have you ever heard of Promise Keepers?” I said I had. That’s all that was said about it. Sometimes God uses even the shortest of conversations to influence people and bring about change.

A group of I believe six of us decided to attend the Promise Keepers conference that was entitled, “The Making of a Godly Man.” I ordered a tape with music that would be sung at the conference. The music was very powerful and convicting. One of the songs was, “It is well with my soul.” It got to the point that I couldn’t listen to that song without the tears flowing uncontrollably. Obviously, it was not well with my soul. God used the August 1997 Promise Keepers conference at the Metrodome in Minneapolis to give me the final push.

The seeds began to grow and change me forever. Just like the “Fifty Day Spiritual Adventure,” there was nothing specific about that weekend that changed me. It was the entire experience. I could feel the overwhelming presence of God filling that place. It is something I am unable to explain. I did not respond to the altar call. I just sat quietly in my seat and for the first time sincerely asked God to forgive me and invited Jesus into my heart.

I would like to share two verses that serve as both a warning and encouragement to me. “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide the way out so that you can stand up under it” (I Corinthians 10: 12-13).

— Lowell Watt
Victory Free Lutheran
Park River, N.D.



Coffee Break

Touching one life at a time

The leaves were glowing in their fall radiance, and as the geese flew overhead, I rejoiced in the Lord for all His goodness. Running errands was not easy for me. My joints and muscles cried out as I got into and out of the car and walked the hard cement paths that my list directed.

September was my favorite time of the year, and I praised God for allowing me to inhale its beauty. I slipped into the City Café & Bakery for a brief rest and a bit of nourishment to gather my thoughts. I always chose the far back booth so I could observe and quietly contemplate.

I heard the door open, and in walked an old man, somewhat crippled and quite comically dressed. His sport coat, pants and shirt were a mish-mash of geometric designs and clashing colors. His black top hat, though, stood tall. As I gazed, I couldn't help but wonder what his story was.

He helped himself to a hot cup of coffee and took a booth alone. I, too, had taken a booth alone — to rest, but he for lack of company, perhaps.

I watched him as I sorted through my shopping list and ate my hot soup. A lady sitting in a booth nearby the old man stood up and went to the counter. I did not watch or listen to her conversation with the waitress.

The lady in the blue sweater walked out the door, unnoticed by most. Then the waitress walked over to the old man and said, "Your coffee has been paid for by the lady in the blue sweater who just went out the door."

He looked in amazement and hurried to finish his coffee so he could catch up to her and thank her. But as he looked up and down the street, she was already gone.

I never saw the old man again. I never saw the

lady in the blue sweater again.

But they had touched my life in such a way that I shall never forget.

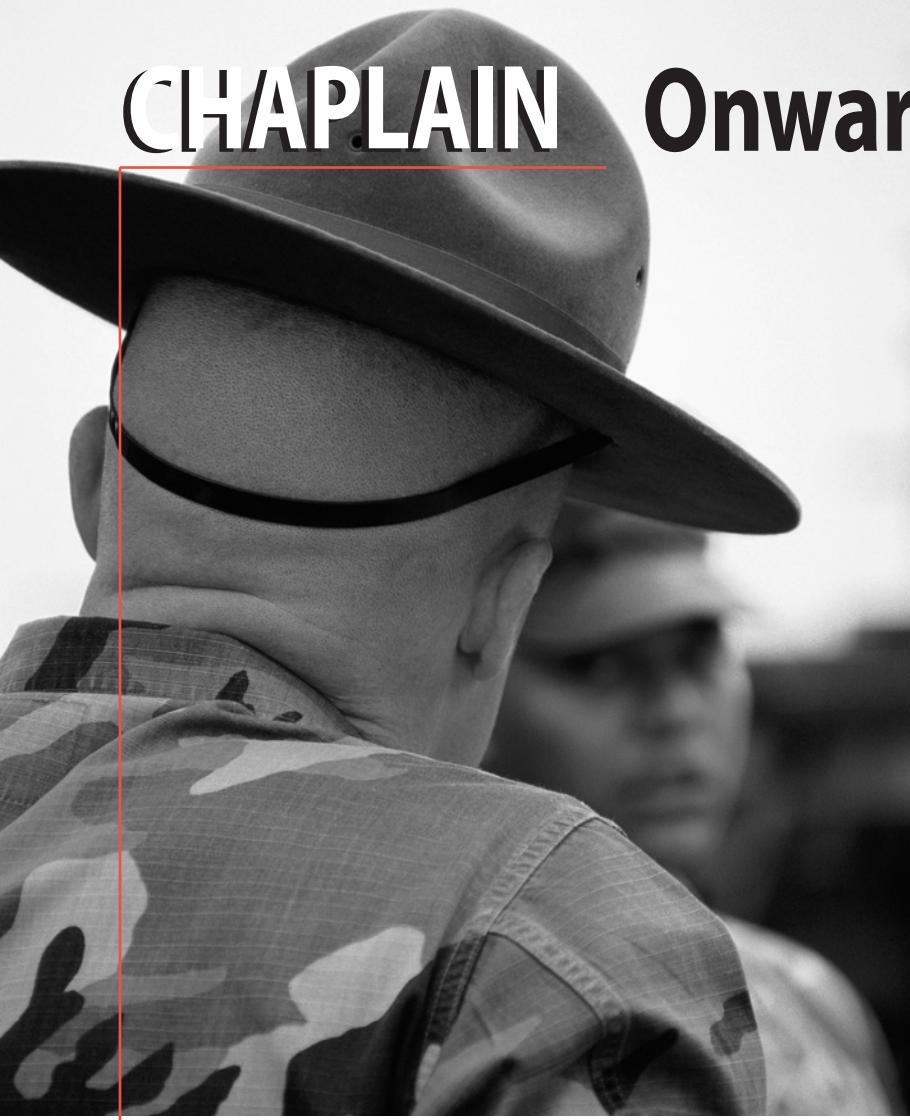
Jesus came to us in the humblest of places that Christmas night 2000 years ago. Jesus still comes to us in the humblest of places, quietly entering our lives and changing us forever. He uses everyday people, everyday places and does everyday tasks to say, "I love you." He walks up to the counter and says, "Your sins have been paid for on the cross. Accept freely the gift."

Forgive us, Lord, for not recognizing You when You're wearing your black top hat or your blue sweater. Help us to look past the comical clothes and hungry faces of people less fortunate than us, for it is then that we find You in all Your glory. Thank You, Lord, that when our wings are broken, You send angels, and when we are too weak to walk, You hold out Your hand and say, "Come with me." Oh Jesus, how we love You. Amen.

— *Glorianne Swenson
Fergus Falls, Minn.*



CHAPLAIN Onward Christians



Imagine this: You have just signed up to serve in the military. You want to do something exciting and see the world. Besides, both of your parents have served in the military, and they thought it was a good experience.

Your bus has just arrived at the training center and you are bracing yourself for the initial treatment that all new recruits receive as part of their welcome into the military. But as you walk down the steps of the bus, you see only one person greeting your group. You notice right away that he isn't dressed like a normal soldier, and he isn't shouting out hurried commands. Instead, this person greets each new recruit with a warm smile and a friendly hug. He calls you by your name and has some kind, encouraging words for each of you. Next, he calls for some other soldiers to carry your baggage off the bus and into a nearby building. He then politely asks all of the new recruits to join him for a welcome



*Craig Benson
Radcliffe, Iowa*

dinner given in their honor.

At this point you are very confused, but you join the other new soldiers in eating some very delicious food. After the meal your host stands up and begins to speak.

"Welcome soldiers. I'm glad you joined my army. Each one of you has a very important job to do. You will be properly trained in that position, but you must also work together as a team. If you don't, the enemy will easily destroy you. So listen carefully to your training instructors, they will tell you everything you need to know. After your training I will give you your specific mission.

"Even though you are only a few soldiers, what you do will make a great difference in the outcome of the entire war. If you accomplish your mission successfully, many people will be saved from the terror of the enemy forces. The enemy has a large army, but with your help we will be victorious. I will be leading you into the battle. I will be with you during each step of your mission, and I will protect you from the enemy forces. We need everyone to do their part if we are to be successful."

As your military leader ends his speech, you wake up and realize that you were only dreaming.

This is how Jesus Christ, our heavenly Leader, recruits and commissions us to be His spiritual soldiers. This story has some very real applications for each of us, especially as we consider the continual need to reach out to others with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

As an Air Force Reserve chaplain, I have a wonderful opportunity to impact the lives of many soldiers. Each year I spend 24 days at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Neb., helping to provide for the spiritual needs of about 5,000 military and civilian people and their families. I support nine full-time military chaplains and work with them in leading worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings, counseling sessions, unit visitations, etc.

The people who serve in our national military are ordinary American citizens, but they have some extra challenges to deal with, such as loneliness, strict discipline, handling deadly weapons and preparing for combat duty. Chaplains are vital to the well being of our military members, especially

See **CHAPLAIN**, page 19



WMF You can take them with you

“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (I John 5:11-12).

In the book “Stories for the Heart,” Josh McDowell tells the story of an executive-hirer, a headhunter, looking for a corporate executive. The candidate was a young, poised prominent businessman ready to further his climb on the corporate ladder. The headhunter disarmed the young man in his usual way and asked a personal question meant to rattle his prey. “What is your purpose in life, Bob?”

Before I share Bob’s response, I want you to answer that question for yourself. My mind goes in many directions. As a Christian, I want to seek God’s will and be loving and kind to my family and friends. As a woman I want to reach out to other women who may be hurting or in need. As a wife I want to be my husband’s best friend and love him with all my heart. As a mother I want to totally love my children and raise them to serve Jesus. As a part of the WMF I want to pray and encourage our missionaries and minister to other women around me. He who has the Son has life.

The answer by the prospective executive was a one-liner and a great focus for all who love Jesus. Bob answered that his purpose in life is “to go to heaven and take as many people with me as I can.” He who has the Son has life.

Today, while taking my son to a therapy appointment, I was involved in a road rage incident. Was I concerned about that driver going to heaven? How about my neighbors across the street who are from Pakistan? Am I concerned that they know Jesus, the Savior of the world? He who has the Son has life.

Leith Anderson, in his “Faith Matters” broadcast on KTIS radio, shared an incident that happened years ago. A Christian lady had invited her neighbor to attend church with her. Although she had asked her repeatedly to no avail, one day the neighbor surprised her by saying that she would wear her best apron. The Christian lady was very concerned knowing that they no longer wore aprons at the church she attended. She called all her friends and asked them to come to church dressed in their best aprons. The women did. The neighbor came and met many new friends, and she continued coming to the church. Months later, this woman realized what the church women had done to make her feel welcome, and she was touched. She wanted to meet the Jesus these women loved and served. He who has the Son has life.

Jesus mingles with people from all walks of life so they can know Him. Bob and the neighbor in these stories desired that others know Jesus. Are we so secure in our comfort zone that we have no concern for the people around us?

Our missionaries so impress me with their love for people all over the world. They would gladly tie on an apron or whatever it takes to reach men and women for the Lord. They know that Jesus loves each one and desires that each one spend eternity with Him. The purpose for these missionaries is also to take as many people with them to heaven as they can.

Our lives can be greatly simplified if we have this as our purpose. This purpose will take us in various directions. The destination is the same — heaven.

— **Jane Rasmussen**
*Grace Free Lutheran
Plymouth, Minn.*



VISION 2004

Sitework, parking and roads complete

Most of the heavy machinery has been moved off campus after completing the paving, curbing, sewer and excavation work. The first layer of asphalt over the roads and parking areas is two and one-half inches deep and forms an hourglass roadway with curbs around the site of the future student center and future dormitories. Next spring, sitework will be completed that couldn't be done this fall because of the weather conditions. Those plans include planting more than 180 trees, laying sod and seeding grass, and minor finish grade work.

Students will be able to park on improved roadways and asphalt for the next few months — as the schools await God's provision and enough funds to begin the \$3.2-\$3.5 million student center building. Since orientation day, Sept. 7, students have parked on roadsides, campus lawns, muddy flats and building pads in a scramble to find space. If sufficient funds come in by April, construction for the new student center could begin as early as next spring.

With a focus on raising funds for the student center, a prayer team has been formed and has begun meeting regularly on campus, with AFLBS Dean Jim Johnson acting as chairman. If you wish to be a prayer partner for Vision 2004, please contact the Vision office at 763-412-2004 or email at vis2004@aflc.org.



ABOVE: By the first of November, crews had completed a majority of paving around the dorms.
LEFT: Before the pavement, students and staff alike had to trudge through a muddy landscape between the dorms and the chapel.

MISSIONS

Personal Support

I entered my office to find a letter from one of our missionary families on my desk. Opening it I began to read about their work. Let me share a couple of sentences from it with you. They wrote, "On Sunday we will be receiving 25 new members in the congregation. ... We have also had several 'seekers' coming to church lately. Six of them prayed to receive God's free gift of grace through Jesus and are now doing weekly discipleship studies with us."



Del Palmer
Director

I need to take more time reading and thinking about missions' end result — saving people.

What is our involvement in the lives of these who are saved? We are the ones who pray and give so the work of God through these missionaries can go forth. Where would the missionaries be if we did not support them personally?

In our association the missionaries are provided for as we support them personally. Unfortunately, the vast majority of our missionaries don't receive the financial support they need. When their funding doesn't come in, their personal support account goes into debt because we have no other way of supporting them. We have borrowed from other areas within the Missions Department to continue supporting them. Two-thirds of our missionaries' personal support accounts are in debt by tens of thousands of dollars each due to shortfalls accumulating in previous years.

Because World Missions has no place to make this money up or take this money from, things will have to change in the very near future. It is our greatest prayer and hope that the people of the Association will rally around our missionaries and help them pay back the debt that has been incurred over the years in their personal support. Would you be willing to make the commitment to support the work of one of our missionary families each month? Could you give a one-time gift to wipe out the personal sup-

CHAPLAIN, from page 16

during times of national conflict and personal crisis.

Military chaplains also have some special needs. They are to uphold the constitutional right of every military member in the free exercise of their religion. Because of the religious diversity in the military setting, there can be some tension or conflict of interest between the chaplain's own beliefs and those who differ. However, chaplains are never to compromise their own beliefs as they seek to minister to others.

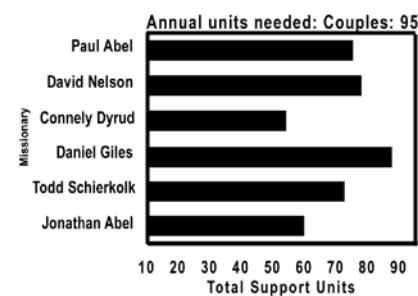
Have you ever considered serving in the Lord's army? Everyone

who believes and is baptized is automatically inducted into this spiritual army, but our leader, Jesus Christ, is looking for more than "a few good men," women and children to join in the gospel-spreading mission. How many people have you seen or talked with today? How many of those people have you shown compassion to, prayed for or talked with about spiritual concerns?

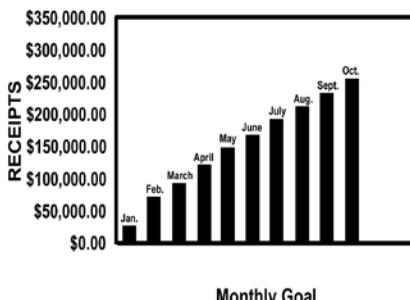
As we are equipped by the Holy Spirit to go to the nations, we are guaranteed protection from Satan's evil forces. Nothing can pierce the armor of God, not even Satan's fiery arrows. Are you ready to go into the spiritual battle? Are you carrying

"PS" PERSONAL SUPPORT UNITS

January / October Goal = 79.0 Units



OCTOBER "PS" TOTALS



port debt? If you need more information, write or call the World Missions office. We'll be glad to help you.

Call the World Missions department at (763) 545-5631.

your shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit?

From one spiritual soldier to another I challenge you to aim high. Don't be satisfied with helping only one person, praying for only one person or having only one spiritual conversation this week. I challenge you to help those who are different from you. Talk about the love of God instead of the hatred among people.

Our heavenly Leader has given us one more command, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38, NIV).



AGING gracefully



The years after age 65 can be a highly creative time of life — a period of personal growth and self-fulfillment. As Picasso said shortly before his death at 91, “A long life is needed to become young.” The Bible makes reference to many people who were active in their old age: Noah, Moses, Joshua, Jacob, Abraham, to mention a few. It seems that God has a divine and noble plan for some people to live beyond the “three score and ten,” which would be the average age of 70.

King Christian IX of Denmark, meeting Dean Skovgaard-Petersen one time when both men were well advanced in years, said to the churchman, “We are really getting on now!” After a moment’s thought, the dean answered, “Yes, but Your Majesty has learned the art of growing old gracefully and with dignity.”

Growing old gracefully, by the grace of God, is truly possible for every one of us, be it at 50, 60 or 80 years old. We can condition ourselves, plan for our senior years and live those years being productive and fruitful. Naturally, it depends on having a positive outlook on life and maintaining good health. Then, too, we need to accept our age. There is no shame in being old. We don’t have to feel unworthy and useless and unimportant.

Psalm 90:14 states, “Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Older people can find satisfaction and joy in their lives and make good use of their time. When I visit the elderly, I find that most of

them are content with life, whether they have little or much in the way of worldly wealth and possessions. Most seem at peace with themselves and with God. They enjoy the little things, which are simple and free and beautiful: the singing of birds, flowers in a garden, homemade cookies and jam, having coffee with a neighbor or friend.

These beautiful and wonderful older Americans have so much to give us who are younger. But so often the younger generation does not appreciate the wealth of knowledge, wisdom, love and life experiences, which the elderly are eager to give and share. The little joys of life seem too simple, too unchallenging for we who are younger.

In his book, “The Evening of Life,” Fredrik Wisloff writes, “Elderly people have learned the art of appreciating the little joys of life, and it is this ability that helps them to make the evening of life bright and happy.”

One of the myths of aging is that people older than 65 are not as bright or productive as younger people. Nothing could be further from the truth. History is full of examples of older people doing outstanding things. Toscanini was still conducting orchestras at 87. Churchill was a world leader in his late 80s. Norman Rockwell painted pictures in his 80s. Michelangelo was chief architect of St. Peter’s Basilica until his death at 89.

There are people in our own communities who are active in church, in volunteer work, in leadership roles — seniors who enjoy what they are doing, are being a blessing to others and bearing fruit in their old age. We thank God for them.

Some time ago there was a television commercial with the words: “Get back into life.” That is a good slogan for all of us who are getting on in years. We live until we die, and by God’s grace make every day count. Christ calls and challenges us to live the abundant life.

Henri Nouwen, in his book, “Aging,” wrote: “Aging is the turning of the wheel, the gradual fulfillment of the life cycle in which receiving matures in giving and living makes dying worthwhile.”

Bearing fruit in old age should be the sincere desire of every Christian, for in this way we leave our witness for Christ and make a difference in this world.

— Rev. Dr. Dale R. Battleson
Stickney, S.D.



Two Thrivent Financial for Lutherans representatives presented grants to (from left) Youth Ministries Director Kevin Olson, Evangelism Director Jim Rasmussen and AFLC President Robert Lee.

Thrivent grants \$22,500 to AFLC departments

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans (AAL/LB) recently awarded grants to three AFLC departments.

The Evangelism Department received a \$13,000 grant to support "Passing on the Baton," a program of eight regional workshops for pastors and laity from AFLC congregations. The one-day programs consist of speakers, praise time and a 30-minute discussion period for people of all ages.

The Youth Ministries Department received a \$7,000 grant. The money will be used to help AFLC congregations improve college-age ministries.

The General Fund received a \$2,500 grant to help offset the cost of the 40th anniversary celebration Oct. 25-28 in Thief River Falls, Minn.



On July 21-26, youths from throughout the country will return to the Rockies for fellowship, fun and workshops. The FLY Convention, a biannual youth retreat hosted by the Free Lutheran Youth, will meet in Estes Park, Colo. Youths in grades seven through high school are invited to attend.

With the theme Tetelestai, Greek for "it is finished," the camp will focus on Jesus' last word from the cross and the finishing work of forgiveness.

Guest speakers include Pam Stenzel, who specializes in workshops on sexuality and abstinence, and Bruce Marchiano, a Christian actor.

Fees are \$300 per student, \$175 per counselor, \$250 for adults and \$60 for children 12 and younger. A \$50 late fee will be charged for registrations received after March 1.

For more information, contact FLY 2003 at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441, or call (763) 545-5631. Register online at www.aflc.org/youth.

Do you know how to share about Jesus?

Do you want to know how to share your faith without an argument, the true meaning of successful witnessing, or who is open to the gospel? Dwight Kiefert, a member of the Commission on Evangelism, is available to present "Sharing Jesus Without Fear," a program meant to

raise awareness to the commandment to share the gospel.

To watch a film clip of this witnessing training program, visit www.gracefree.com/sharejesus. For more information, contact the Evangelism Department at (763) 545-5631.

Dickinson group celebrates 25 years together

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Dickinson, N.D., celebrated its 25th anniversary the weekend of Aug. 17-18 with the theme, "To God Be the Glory." God's Mighty Handful, the puppet team, gave a medley of their past performances during an evening program. Slides were shown spanning the 25 years of Our Saviour's. Roger Gabbert, the first chairman of the congregation, and others present, shared stories.

On Sunday, AFLC President Pastor Bob Lee gave a message on Deuteronomy 7:9, reminding the congregation that God is faithful to keep His promises.

During a special program, charter members were recognized and Pastors Al Monson, Terry Olson, and Bob Lee shared some remarks. AFLBS graduate and MTI student Amy Hecker, also shared.

Charter members in attendance were Rex and Ann Cook, Roger and Alice Gabbert, Della Heid, Robert and Una Mae Penne, and Jack and Judy Rustan.

Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D., welcomed new members. They are Heather, Matt, Jeff and Kathy Barta, Jim Sollin, Betty and Dennis Haakenson, and Enid Olson.

Pastor Craig Benson, Radcliffe, Iowa, is serving a three-month tour of duty as chaplain at the Los Angeles Air Force Base beginning Dec. 9.

Resurrection Evangelical

Lutheran, York, Pa., was received onto the AFLC congregational roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. The congregation is seeking a pastor.

Pastor Gordon Thorpe, a retired pastor from Eau Claire, Wis., was received onto the clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee.

Pastor David Fruehauf, a retired

pastor from New Hope, Minn., was received onto the clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee.

Pastor Mark Homp, Zumbrota, Minn., was removed from the clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee.

Pastor Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, S.D., was removed from the clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee at his own request.

WMF seeks nominations for executive secretary

The Women's Missionary Federation is seeking suggestions from the membership-at-large for a woman to fill the position of WMF executive secretary. This half-time position is open to AFLC women who are interested in furthering the purpose of WMF. Contact Cheryl Skordahl, 1411 Terrace Dr., Fergus Falls, MN 56537 or dcskor@prtel.com.

ARC hosts retreats in February, March

The ARC Campus in Osceola, Wis., will be host to three events on February 7-9: SidebySide for grades 7-12, Jr. Sno Daze for grades 4-7 and a Prayer Retreat.

The Prayer Retreat will be a wonderful time to get away and spend some time in communion with the Lord. Adults who are driving students to the other retreats will find this a wonderful haven for the weekend. The Mary and Martha House will offer the cozy lodging accommodations, complete with a fireplace in the living room. Pastors David Johnson, Earl Korhonen, Dick Gunderson and Kevin Olson will be leading worship and prayer. The cost is \$50 if registered by January 28.

The WMF will host a Women's Retreat March 28-30 at the ARC. Special speakers include Rose Carlson, who authored the 2002 WMF Bible study on Proverbs, Cheryl Skordahl, WMF president, and the mother-daughter duo of Dorothy Hjermstad and Tammy Vukonich. The Snipstead sisters will lead praise and worship. Registration cost is \$65 before March 17.

Call 1-888-748-3969 for more information about these retreats.

AFLC memorials — November

Department

In memory of ...

AFLBS

*Lowell Breiland
Arnold McCarlson
Isabelle Uphoff
James Swanson*

AFLTS

*Louis Metz
Rev. Vince Will
Corinne Wentzel*

Home Missions

*Eva Mae Anderson
Bert Rivard
James Swanson
Pauline Meyers
King Auestad
Mrs. Groven*

World Missions

Martha Hultstrand

*Gladys Hegre
Pauline Meyers
Alfred Tofte*

Vision 2004

*James Hanson
Gladys Hegre
Marilyn Bannerman
Isabelle Uphoff
Norman Erickson Jr.
Patricia Scavo
Arnold McCarlson
Erling Hoseth
Helen Afseth
Leonard Kragh*

Youth Ministries
Erling Skarderud

In honor of ...

Vision 2004
Mr. and Mrs. Nels Linder

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (11 months) — January 1 - November 30, 2002

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN NOVEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,060.00	\$21,533.46	\$226,896.91	85
Youth Ministries	55,413.00	3,847.55	55,656.91	100
Parish Education	71,687.00	5,920.23	54,307.79	76
Seminary	118,938.00	14,221.87	117,132.40	98
Bible School	217,227.00	11,714.92	237,497.00	109
Home Missions.	278,872.00	19,703.54	214,410.39	77
Church Extension	23,093.00	653.91	17,105.57	74
World Missions.	199,994.00	19,070.90	183,612.08	92
Personal Support	288,000.00	24,086.94	310,657.70	108
TOTALS	\$1,521,284.00	\$120,773.32	\$1,417,276.75	93
TOTALS 2001	\$1,119,759.00	\$141,735.50	\$1,128,349.72	101
Goal 92%				

The Evangelism Department received \$8,051.18 in November for a total of \$68,884.95.

EDITORIAL Looking within

I was talking with someone at an athletic club about serving and sacrificing for others. He wanted to do that and knew he should, but he also wondered, "Isn't it okay if sometimes I just take care of me?" We talked about how it's a matter of motivation. Some of our time should be spent caring for ourselves — spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically — but it's done not out of selfishness but for the purpose of getting us in shape to care for others.



Craig Johnson
Editor

It works the same way in congregations. A central part of reaching out to others is caring for those who are already in. We share the love of Jesus with the world by working hard at loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. We make the good news of Jesus known to those who have never heard by serving those who have

already heard.

Evangelizing the world starts with loving our fellow members of the family of God. That is the evangelistic program used by the early Church. It is what Jesus commanded. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35, NIV). We often rely on things like the size of our sign, the beauty of our building, great music or interesting programs to make ourselves known in the community. Jesus said it is when we love one another that we get the message out and make the good news known.

Those other things like buildings and programs can be good and have their place. But they are not to be the first thing we rely on in our effort to evangelize our communities. They are not to be our focus to the extent that we neglect caring for one another. The greatest program in the world will not make up for a failure to love. We cannot expect God to honor our evangelistic efforts if we are disobedient to His command to love and care for His children.

We are not given precise details in the book of Acts about outreach programs the early Church conducted. We are told that "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." We also learn of how "they gave

to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 45-47).

Their relationships with one another were strong. They were devoted to each other, sharing with one another, caring for one another. That resulted in evangelism.

Evangelism is portrayed not so much as something they did, but more as something that God did as a result of how they loved one another. Acts 5:12-14 tells of how "all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the

Lord and were added to their number." They were meeting together, loving the Lord and loving one another; and God added to their number. Sometimes we have worked at reaching people who are outside the fold of God, but failed to care for those who are already in the fold. It is wrong to talk about evangelism and at the same time talk harshly to our fellow Christian. We should have a concern for outreach and also a concern for unity. It is good to put much work and effort into sharing the good news with

those who are apart from the Lord. We put equal effort into loving those who are already in a relationship with Christ.

Putting a great emphasis on loving those who are already in the family of God does not mean we have less of a concern for those who do not yet know Jesus. Spreading the good news, being Christ's ambassadors is the reason we are here. It is the calling and mission of the Church. We must always maintain a deep interest in reaching those who are outside the fold. At the same time, however, we recognize that we cannot expect God to bring new ones in if we are not loving and caring for the ones who are already in. As we grow in our love for one another we become a safe place for newborns in the faith to be delivered. We pray that what was said about Philemon will be true about us: "I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith" (Philemon 5, 6).

Evangelizing the world starts with loving our fellow members of the family of God.

THE ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

For real?

Do you remember when you discovered that the jolly ol' Santa Claus and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer were nothing more than a myth? It was five stages of death ... denial, confusion, anger, grief, and, finally, acceptance. There would be no more presents from Santa. Perhaps even worse was the realization that someone you trusted led you on for years believing in such a lie.

Our culture has become accustomed to lies — from political leaders to the fine print on the bottom of the page, or from waiting for the punch line from the telemarketer that says you've won a free vacation to magazines that use computers to alter super models, even movies that use green screens to make it appear that the scene is shot on location. With the high-tech computer society we live in, anything can be changed to make it look real.

How do Christians introduce friends, co-workers and neighbors to

the truth of Jesus Christ without being dismissed as another storyteller? First, we can point them to the prophesies of the Messiah and how all of them were fulfilled in one man, Jesus. We can show them the four steps to salvation that reveal we are separated from God because of sin, and Jesus alone fills that gap. However, I believe the thing that makes the greatest impact is sharing what a difference having a relationship with Jesus Christ has made in our own personal lives. That makes it real.

The 2003 ARC theme is John 14:6, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.'" We stand on that truth. We extend that "way" to all guests who attend our retreats. We pray that they will find the life that makes a difference. Invite a friend to attend a retreat with you this year and you will have a memorable time ... for real.

— Pam Olson
ARC program coordinator

2003 ARC Schedule

- February 7-9**
Prayer Retreat
- Side by Side (grades 7-12)*
- Jr. Sno Daze (grades 4-7)*
- February 14-15**
Couple's Retreat
- March 28-30**
Women's Retreat
- April 25-26**
Men's Retreat
- June 20-22**
Teen Retreat (grades 8-12)
- June 22-27**
Jr. Camp (grades 4-7)
- June 27-29**
Kid's Kamp (grades 1-3)
- July 27-August 1**
Family Camp
- October 3-5**
Classic's Retreat
- Fall Family Retreat*