

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

JULY 2003

**'Receive
this child,
Receive Me'**

— Mark 9:37 —



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Encouraging Word

What does God look like?

“I and the Father are one” (John 10:30, NIV).

One of the greatest gifts God has blessed me with is having grandchildren. Their honesty, love and creativity continue to amaze me. Their perspective on life is always new and fresh.

I have a tradition of asking each of them what theme they would like on their cake for each birthday. My “cake lady” has been amazed over and over again at what I ask for. Such things as tractors in fields, motorcycles on dirt tracks, dinosaurs, Barney, and Barbie appear without hesitation.



*Glorianne Swenson
Calvary Free Lutheran,
Fergus Falls,
Minn.*

As our granddaughter, Mariah, approached her seventh birthday, I asked the million-dollar question. “I would like clouds,” she said with certainty. “With God in the clouds,” she added.

This didn’t surprise me. With wisdom far beyond her years, she had always posed some very in-depth questions. “Who is God?” “Does He have a baby?” “Where does He live?” “What does He do?”

Now the challenge rested with me. What does God look like? I e-mailed friends and family asking for help in portraying God in the clouds. It was suggested that since no one has ever seen God and no one knows what He looks like, that we should just go with the clouds and explain that concept to her.

I knew this would not be

acceptable to Mariah; she was expecting to see God! I also knew that I could not give this task to the cake lady. When I called her with the request, I told her just to put beautiful fluffy clouds in the sky, and I would come up with God.

I needed to come up with an image of God soon! Ideas bounced around in my head. Then it came to me. The answer was so simple. John 1:14 declares that God became a human and lived among us. God comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ. “... When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:44-45).

When Mariah’s birthday came and the cake arrived, I placed a beautiful figure of Jesus in the clouds. Mariah’s eyes sparkled, for she saw God — just as she expected! John 14:9 tells us in Jesus’ words: “... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

Father God, let us experience Your true awesomeness. You come to us in big and small ways. You are the dew on the morning grass and the gentleness in the face of a sleeping baby. You are the fragrance of a flower in spring and the beauty of a summer day. You are the brightness of a sunbeam and the promise in the rainbow. You are the answer to a little girl’s expectations. You came to us as the Christ Child, tugging at our hearts. You came into the world as a light, so that all who believe in You will not stay in darkness. You are everything we expected Lord! Amen.

SOUND BITES

Parents can make kids feel secure by reminding them regularly of their love for each other and for them. That security is only strengthened when children hear parents speak positively and appreciatively about the church where they worship.

— Terry Conner

It's not easy to go against the culture and teach teens to think in terms of absolute truth. However, the more they understand God's love for them, the more they'll experience first-hand the freedom and purposefulness that come from living in line with the most foundational principles of the universe.

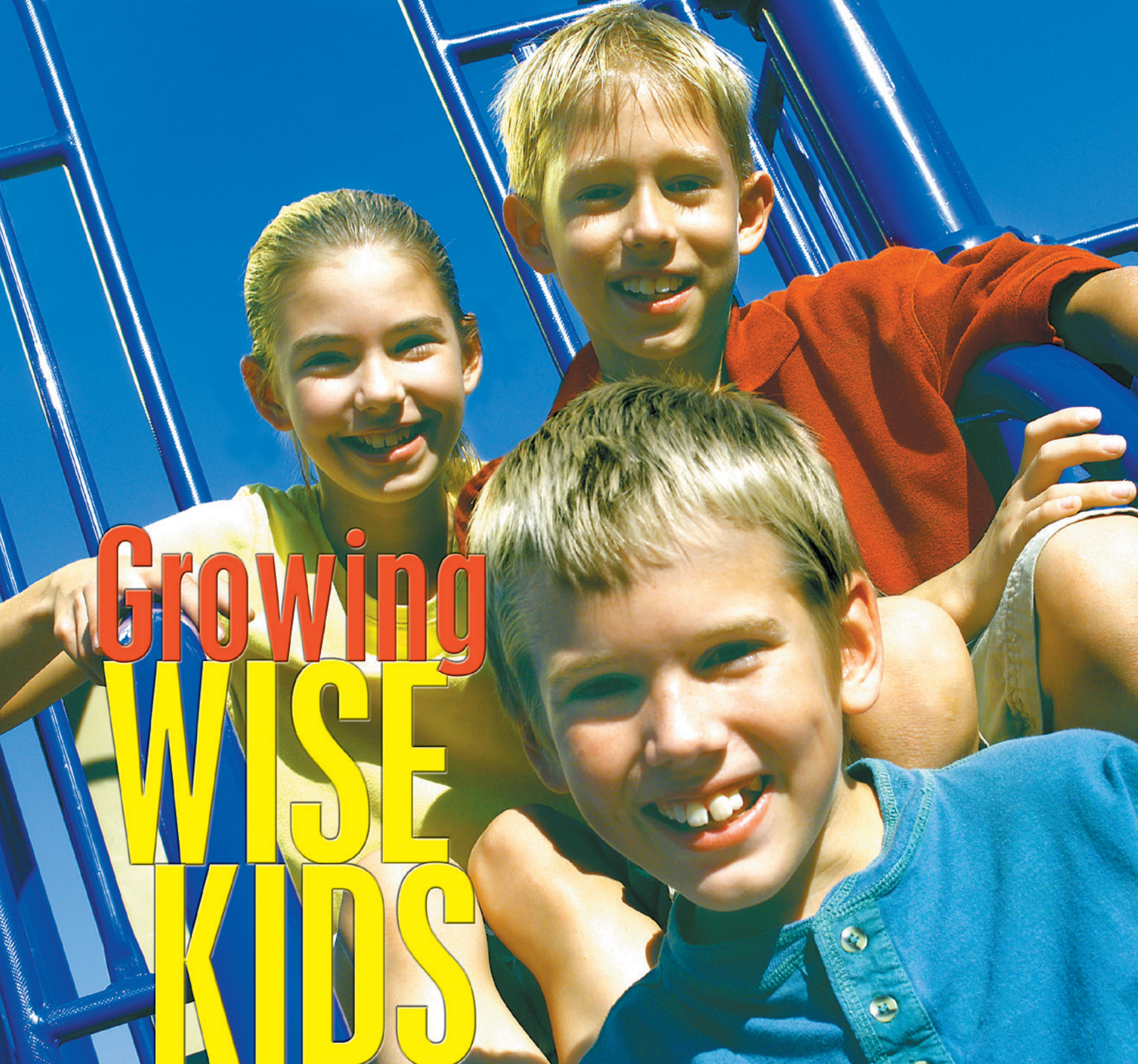
— Lindy Beam

With childish and playful methods like these we may bring up our youth in the fear and honor of God ... This would be the right way to bring up children, so long as they can be trained with kind and pleasant methods, for those who have to be forced by means of rods and blows will come to no good end; at best they will remain good only as long as the rod is on their backs.

— Martin Luther
Large Catechism

World evangelism has always relied heavily upon young people. ... God is still using young people to carry the gospel across the globe.

— David Shibley



Joe and Chris did everything together. They went biking, canoeing, and camping together. They even dated the same girl. They were in youth group together, confirmed their faith together, and graduated together. But that is where the two of them separated.

Joe stayed in town and started hanging out with a different crowd. He started drinking and smoking marijuana. He married a girl, but it only lasted for three years. His dad died shortly after that, and he

started traveling to escape his pain. But it only seemed to make the pain worse.

Chris took a different path. The temptations he faced weren't any different at college, but his response was different. Instead of drinking with his classmates, he made some friends who had different priorities. He broke up with a girl who wasn't going the same direction that he was. His parents were divorced during college, but instead of running from his problems, he ran to Christ.



Why such a difference between these two guys? What causes one to choose one path and another a different one? Joe and Chris both believed in Christ, had Christian parents, a strong youth group, and biblical training, yet their paths went in opposite directions.

Teaching youths to make good choices and wise decisions can seem like fate. It would be without the Lord. Without the Holy Spirit directing their lives, youths will always choose their own way and selfish interests. But there is more to this training beyond personality and chance.

The Lord desires us to make wise decisions and train our children how to do the same. Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it." The method is not new, but applying it to life can be a challenge.

First, the Word of God is essential if we are going to train youths to make decisions contrary to the world and the countless influences that they face. Wise deci-

sions must begin with wisdom beyond the mind of man. It is not enough to speak of the importance of God's Word to our children; it must become their own. They must desire it for themselves.

Second, living examples of God's Word teach our children how to apply that wisdom to daily life. Training is done, in part, through our words, but so much more through our actions. When the example of our own lives reflects the wisdom of God's Word, then what we say is multiplied by a consistent life. Essentially, this means

that teaching children to make wise decisions begins with learning how to make wise decisions ourselves. I Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

Third, pray for the decisions that your children are making. You can influence a person from the outside by what you say or what you do, but the Lord can speak to them on the inside. He knows when they are ready to learn and how best to teach them. He is the one who has begun the work, and He is the one who will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6).

Consider the following practical steps for your own life:

- Ask the Lord about your decisions and invite him to direct every

step. God cares about the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. He invites us to ask him about even the smallest needs.

- Listen to the Lord speak to you.

Our lives can be

so fast-paced and distracted that we don't hear anything that the Lord wants to say. Listening to the Lord means hearing His words rather than just reading them. Listening takes practice and patience. Listening means humbling yourself before the Lord and setting aside any personal agendas that we might have.

- Prepare a thought process. Decide how you are going to make decisions before you are in the situation. Pray, listen to God's Word, get spiritual counsel, ask questions, wait, and watch for the Lord's leading.

- Consider the consequences and impact of the decision.

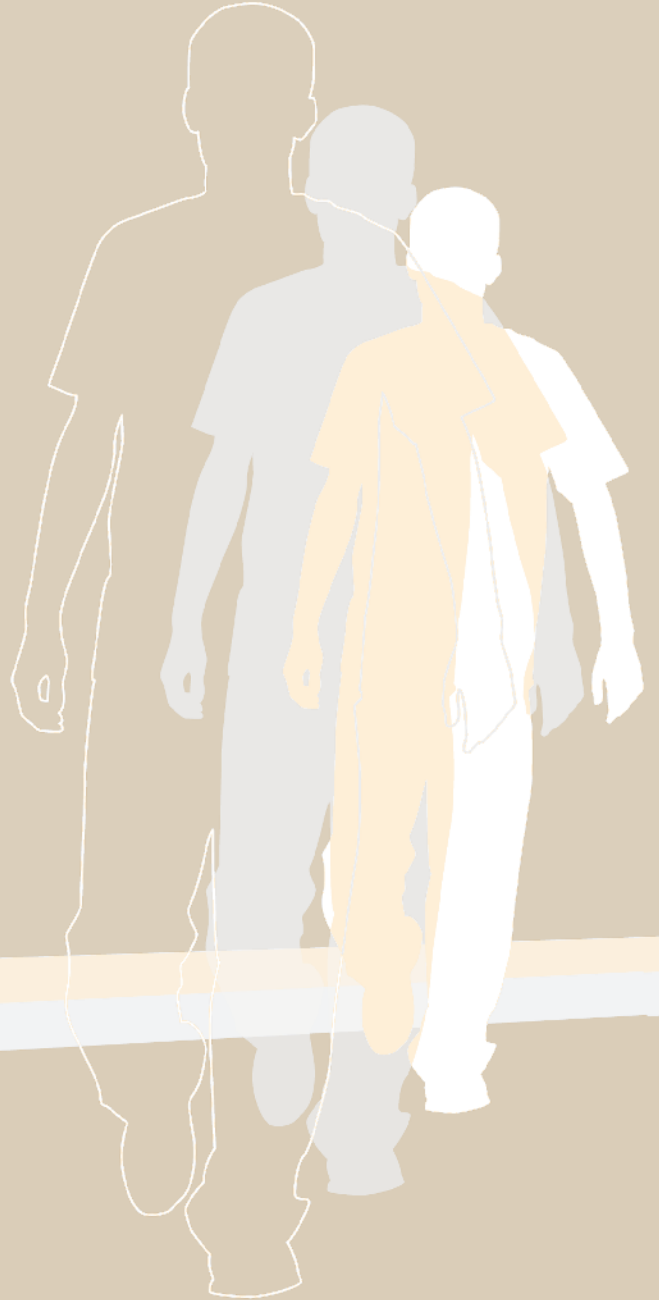
Perhaps you find that you or those around you have already made bad decisions. There will be consequences and your life may be impacted by them. However, the Lord can work all things together for good when you turn it ALL over to Him.

What about Joe and Chris? Their lives are still very different and Joe is still distant from the Lord. Recently, his daughter started singing songs about Jesus to him and reading the Bible that she received at Sunday school. Maybe she will be the one to teach her father how to make wise decisions. Joe, it is never too late.

— *Pastor Kevin Olson*
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

**Wise decisions
must begin with
wisdom beyond the
mind of man.**

A MINISTRY



WORTH PURSUING

The very first step in youth ministry is to get to praying! Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit must do the leading and give direction. Jesus must be the center. Jesus is to be honored in all that is done. One person has said, “Do not go to your youth with God until you have gone to God with your youth.”

If you have no training, it would be a good idea to get some kind of training. Son Life Ministries of Elgin, Ill., offers training for youth workers. Our AFLC has used this training for several years. It will be worth the effort to be trained. There are a number of pastors and youth workers in our AFLC who can be of help.

Visit with your pastor. Get his insights on what he would like to see in your youth ministry. The pastor remains a key person in youth ministry and maybe can even do training right in your congregation.

Encourage the pastor to be involved. Start a youth ministry team and be certain the pastor is encouraged to be part of the team. Stay within the confines of the pastor’s leading so you will always have his blessing. Also, stay within the confines of the church council, deacons and your youth ministry committee.

Get the parents together. Youth ministry must involve parents. You need their support. You need their input and their help. Parents need to feel that they own the ministry. When they are involved, they will send their children and teens.

Get the students together. Ask them what they would like to do. Getting their ideas and following through on them is vital. Students will respond better when they own their own ministry. This may mean that they will lead the Bible studies and the meetings and you will be in the background. You can meet with your leaders and encourage them to be involved in the ministry and to have their own ministry.

Channel them to think in terms of the spiritual realm. Maybe they will have to write down the sensitive topics. Youth ministry must be geared to meeting the needs of the students as well as to give students the training necessary to meet the needs of other students and adults. This way they become and are a part of your congregation’s ministry.

The “core” of youth ministry is not some kind of

a youth “program.” What works for someone else may not work in your congregation. The core of youth ministry is to love your students and share God’s Word with them. Your friendship and love for them is more important than all the books with programs in them. Honest!

Youth ministry should be a training ground for leadership. Elect officers and teach the group what the officers are to do. It should be done just like your congregation does.

Plan, carry out your plans and evaluate again.

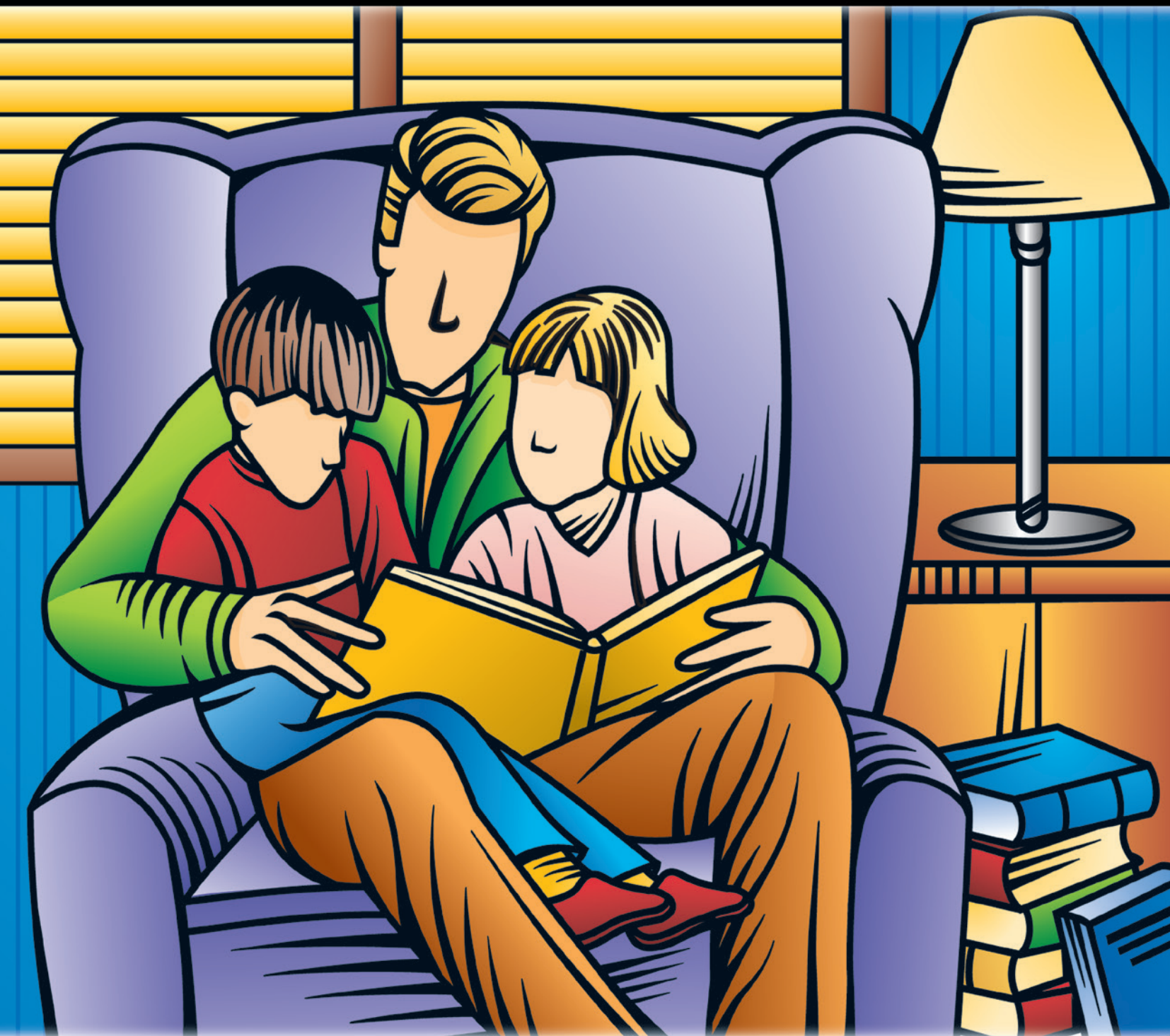
Never count noses, and never compare yourself to another youth ministry person or congregation. It does take a few years to develop a youth ministry. Then it is cyclical in nature.

And, never say you are too small. Do things with other congregations. There are special events to take advantage of. Your ministry will spill over into the hearts and lives of others, youth or adult. Remember, the Christian youths are the church of today, not the church of tomorrow. Disciple your students for their own ministry and you will see that they stay close to Jesus and His Church.

“These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:11-16).

— **Pastor Dennis Gray**
Newfolden, Minn.
www.wiktel.net/dgray

FAMILY DEVOTIONS



Kids talk about why time together in the Word of God is so important

I have been reading through the Bible ever since I was young. You would think that after 13 years it would get kind of stale reading and studying the same thing over and over. What keeps it exciting is that my parents use a variety of ways to keep our devotions interesting for the family.

We usually read from the Bible depending on the book of our choice (New Testament or Old Testament), point out what it means, study it and apply it to our lives. We divide up the chunks of Scripture so everyone gets a chance to read. That way our study is not just led by one person. I think this is a good way to make everyone in the family feel like they have a part in the devotion time. We often share our study references, thoughts and opinions about the text. I personally grow a lot from this study part of our devotions.

Sometimes we will read the Scripture and divide up different sections for our family to act out. This is about the most interaction

you will see in our family. It is a lot of fun while you are acting out the part. It is also cool to imagine what it would have been like to be that individual person.

We also have a Bible quiz game that we play while traveling or with large groups that join us at our house. This is probably one of the most thought-provoking things that we do for our devotions. The game asks questions on topics of real life issues referring to the Bible and to our own personal lives as well. This is a good way for me to learn more about my family, their needs and find out where they are with the Lord and their walk with Him.

Joshua 1:8: "Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

— *Nathan Olson*
Faith Lutheran
Shakopee, Minn.

“**F**ear the Lord your God ... keep all His commandments ... love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength ... teach [these things] diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:2,5,7).

Some of my most vivid childhood memories come from family devotions. These times of Scripture reading and prayer drew us together in ways I see now even after six of us eight kids have moved out of our parents' house. Family devotions built better relationships in our family as a whole and also one-on-one by making us comfortable talking about spiritual things and praying each other through personal struggles.

My parents taught us kids by example that any time is a good time to lift a care before God. As soon as they heard of a need they gathered as many of us as were around to pray. No matter where each of us is living or what's going on in our lives, we can always go to each other for prayer knowing that wherever two or more are gathered in God's name, there He is in their midst.

— *Theresa Welsch*
Amery Free Lutheran
Amery, Wis.

What's the best way to build family ties, stay close to God, and have

daily direction from Him? Get together for family devotions! It can be hard when parents lead such fast-paced lives while trying to juggle their children's activities besides. However, having the peace of God leading your family can really help life seem not quite as crazy.

Since the schedules in our family seem to be nonstop, my Dad will read devotions before school while we're eating breakfast or getting ready for the day. Then we'll pray together. It's cool how sometimes what we learn that morning will surface later on, and that foundation in Christ can help in making important decisions that very same day.

Daily devotion time with family is also a good way to unwind at night before bed because it helps everyone bring their burdens to Jesus. Having that bond as a family of Christ is so special because we don't need to worry about present problems or the unknown future when Jesus is walking right beside us.

Romans 8:38-39 says, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If we have Christ in our hearts, we'll want to spend time growing in His Word. Let the light of God's love shine through your family by sharing Jesus with them every day.

— *Christina Rolf*
Grace Free Lutheran
Valley City, N.D.

An open letter



to my grandchildren

To Philip, Daniel, Joseph Andrew, Andrew, Joseph Frederick, Joshua D., Ann Marie, Joshua P., Odell, and Sarah:

Please listen to Grandpa.

He is more than five times older than the eldest of you. And years do count. Oh yes, you do know more than he does about a lot of things. He marvels at how much you know about sports, computers, VCRs, dinosaurs, trains, bugs, capital cities — and the list goes on and on. But Grandpa knows more about life. It's really quite simple: since he is a lot older than you are, he has lived a lot more of it. So, please listen to Grandpa.

Go to church every Sunday

All of you are very privileged since your parents love Jesus and they take you to church. But soon you will be older. Don't rebel. Go. Listen. Sing. Learn the hymns. Memorize the commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and many, many Bible verses.

Read the Bible

All of you can read. Some of you are just learning to read. Others of you devour books. There are so many good books. Read them, but don't forget the best book, the Bible.

Pray

Think about God. Talk to Him in your mind, even out loud. You can talk to Him about everything. Don't forget to thank Him always and for everything.

Respect and obey your parents

Yes, even though your parents are not perfect. They are not always right. Not even your Grandpa

is always right. But God tells you to respect and obey your parents. And if you do, things are just going to turn out better for you. If you don't, life will be miserable. God knows best! And your parents do love you even though they are not perfect. You see, their parents (your grandparents) are not perfect, either. Nor are you perfect. We all have sinned and fall short. You know that. We all need to be forgiven. I am sure your parents have forgiven you many, many times. I'll bet you can't even count the number of times you have needed to be forgiven. So forgive your parents as well. And pray for them. Forgive Grandpa also, and pray for him. Jesus forgives us and we need to forgive others.

Watch out for the devil's traps

He wants you to sin and turn away from Jesus. The devil uses many tricks and has many traps. He wants to catch us and destroy us. He uses TV, computers, bad books, bad friends. There are some people who appear to be good, but are really bad. They want you to do dirty things, to keep secrets, to turn you from that which is clean and good. No matter who they are, turn from them and tell your parents. And surely pray to Jesus for strength.

Jesus is your Friend and Savior

You can count on Him. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He died for you and is alive. Your parents love you. Grandma and Grandpa love you. But remember, Jesus' love is even better.

— **Odell Kittelson**
Helmar Lutheran
Newark, Ill.



Raising Servant Leaders

On May 1, a memorial service for Pastor Gerald Mundfrom, Osceola, Wis., was held in the AFLC Schools' campus chapel. Margaret, his wife of 53 years, led her family to the front pew followed by her children and grandchildren. What would seem to be a common procession to the casual observer was a truly remarkable sight of a family serving the Lord. Four of their six children (three sons and three daughters) are AFLC pastors or pastors' wives, Rachel (Bill) Chesley is a Bible translator in Chad, Africa, and their eldest son is Dr. Daniel Mundfrom, chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.

For many years, Pastor Mundfrom's name was synonymous with Mercy and Truth Publishers, Inc., the ministry he founded. These latter years, declining health prevented traveling and speaking, so he distributed his four books and 42 titles of sermon booklets through orders off the Internet. The

name of his ministry is based on Psalm 25:10: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Reflecting on Pastor Mundfrom's 85 years of life confirms the promise given in that verse.

Gerald Mundfrom joined with thousands of other young Americans to fight in World War II, an experience that deeply affected him. The winter of 1949 started his final year in seminary. He attended the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement's Bible Conference and met an LEM secretary, Margaret Lindquist. Gerald was a man of faith and trust and sensed he had met a like-minded young lady. Their paths crossed later that summer when they traveled to Helmar Lutheran Church in Illinois, where Gerald preached for a mutual friend, missionary Sigurd Larsen. Before the service, Gerald and Margaret sat in the car and prayed. Gerald asked God to show them His will for their lives. When they concluded, Margaret asked, "What did

you mean?”

“Well, would you be willing to go to the mission field with me?”

Confident of God’s leading, Margaret answered, “Yes.” They walked into church that morning realizing he had just proposed and she accepted.

Missions had long been a passion for both Gerald and Margaret, and each had a sibling serving in a foreign land. As they prepared for their wedding, they dreamed of living in East Africa working with the Sudan Mission. However, the Lord showed them a different road as Gerald’s health record prevented approval along with the mission being absorbed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

“So I guess the Lord had Rachel go for me,” Gerald once mused about his daughter, who works with Wycliffe. “It’s like David. He wanted to build the temple, but God said, ‘No, your son will build it.’”

And so began a series of pastorates in North and South Dakota and a stint with Global Gospel Fellowship in Minneapolis from 1952 to 1969. As the 1960s began, so did Gerald’s bouts and hospitalizations with depression. In 1969 he resigned as pastor of his congregation in Grafton, N.D., and started to write of his experiences in his first book, “Purged.”

He once said, “We saw some difficult times but we always experienced God’s hand of blessing as people came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. My kids saw my problems and it was nothing to model. I preached the gospel and also warned of dangers. As parents we made mistakes, but God was merciful. He gave them a real love for Him and His Word. Yes, we encouraged them to read it and taught the Bible to them early in life.”

He added, “John was good to look after his younger brothers and sisters. He was a good example.”

Gerald and Margaret’s children were never pressured to make certain choices. In fact, Gerald told his kids often how proud he would be of them in any chosen path. Their selfless parents gave their unconditional support encouraging each child to freely obey the Lord’s leading.

In 1976 the Mundfrom household was smaller with the older children either having graduated from or attending AFLBS (all six children were to graduate from the AFLC’s Bible school and four of the oldest grandchildren are alumni or are attending the

school). Stephen, the youngest, remembers the excitement of his parents in seeing his older brothers and sisters following God wherever He led. As for themselves, Gerald and Margaret still had missions burning in their hearts, so they moved to Nogales, Ariz. Four years later the children were through high school and the Mundfroms’ last move sent them to Osceola, Wis., where Mercy and Truth Publishers Inc. was established.

One day last summer, as Gerald finished telling me their life’s story, Margaret quietly smiled and said, “God never left us wanting. Many times we saw

While growing up in a Christian family, I learned more about following Jesus from my parents’ example than from anything they taught me directly. I saw the servant-attitude in my mother as she always put the needs of her husband and children ahead of her own. I watched my father repeatedly look to the Bible for direction and pray about important family decisions. I learned that God’s Word was to be taken seriously and used as a guiding principle for life’s decisions through daily times of devotions and prayer, which my parents observed diligently. On many occasions following our supper meal I can remember how an informal evening ballgame with my friends, or a game of tag, hide ‘n seek, or red rover, had to wait until after the Bible story was read and we shared together in prayer. It was in situations like this that my parents instilled in us a deep respect for Scripture along with practical, Godly wisdom for living.

— **Pastor John Mundfrom**

an opportunity to share the Lord with others and we felt everything that happened to us was worth it.”

The children saw the priorities of their parents.

Pastor Stephen recalled, “Mom and Dad didn’t raise us with the emphasis that we needed to serve them. Rather, we were free to go wherever God led us. It didn’t make any difference if it was 1,500 miles away or even around the world. They trusted God to take care of their needs as they had seen Him do for many years.”

Psalm 100:5 proclaims: “For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.” I can almost see Gerald’s slight smile and his head nod with thanksgiving to the Lord for His way filled with mercy and truth.

— **Solveig Hjermstad
Bruce, S.D.**

WMF What's in your home?

When I became a mom some 34 years ago and someone would ask me about my career, I would say, "I'm just a homemaker." Somehow I felt embarrassed. Today, I'm not ashamed to say I'm a homemaker. For the first time I am excited about my career title.

Each of us lives in a place we call home. So what is a home? Where is our home? Here is what HOME can be.

H stands for

The H in HOME conjures up many emotional words: haven, happy, helpful, hopeful, or heavenly. Or it can stand for hurtful, hateful, hostile, harsh, and just plain horrible. Which of these H words describes your home or describes you, the homemaker?

I watched a portion of a biography on the life of a great ice skater, Scott Hamilton. He was diagnosed some years ago with cancer. He said he did not look on it as a disability. "The only disability in life is a bad attitude," he said. What attitude is in my home, in your home? Do our homes have a disability? We as moms are the ones who set the mood of our home, if we are honest with ourselves. We have a choice: harmony or hostility, happy or harpy.

O stands for others

As a mom there isn't much time for me. Remember as a teenager how it was all about me? Well, marriage and a family can be a rude awakening because we as mothers are constantly looking out for the needs and wants of others. Again, our attitude plays a big role in how we handle the responsibility. We can look on our little ones as a gift wrapped in soft, smooth skin. But what do we find inside? How do we treat this most precious gift of life?

One thing we as moms must be aware of is that O in others also includes our spouse. The greatest gift we can give our children is to love their father. Our children will feel that love and caring and it will give them a security nothing else can compare to. Show affection toward your mate — hold hands, hug, give him a kiss. Your children may act embarrassed, but they will love it. I have four sons (now they are grown) and they all say they wish their dad and I had shown more outward affection in front of them.

M stands for memory

Many of you now work on photo albums or memory books. I'm sure each of you, when asked about the home



you grew up in, have memories that come to mind. In many cases the first ones that come to your mind are the ones that affected your emotions the most.

Each day we are creating memories for our children. When our children were little tots we would go on one- or two-day trips. Sometimes it was taking them to see Grandma and Grandpa. Sometimes we would just head to a hotel or motel 50 miles or so from home. It was a time for us to relax, swim and just hear our little guys saying, "Watch me, Mommy! Watch me, Daddy!" They got our full attention. Will your children remember getting your full, undivided attention? I pray you are making memories your children will cherish, and love talking about in the years ahead.

E stands for eternity

The great evangelist, Billy Graham, asks, "Where will you be 100 years from now? You will be just as alive in 100 years as you are today!" That's what eternal is — everlasting. We as moms (and dads) have a responsibility to our little ones to introduce them to their eternal, everlasting Father. Maybe some of you did not have a father in your home, or maybe today your children do not have an earthly father in their home. But we can all have an eternal, loving Father, one who watches over and protects us as moms and over our precious children.

He longs to be a part of your home — won't you let Him in? He promises never to leave us or forsake us, and He never breaks a promise.

— Helene Olson
Good Shepherd Lutheran
Camarillo, Calif.

This article was written for a MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) newsletter in Camarillo, for which Helene Olson has been a mentor mom for the last two years.

Chaplain What it's like to be me

Hospital chaplaincy is a ministry of its own

Nearly two and a half years ago I began working at Saint Francis Medical Center in Grand Island, Neb. Initially I was looking to supplement my income, while continuing to serve as pastor of Saint Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nysted (rural Dannebrog). I had no idea how this part-time job would cause me to stretch and grow. Not since seminary have I been so challenged and stimulated spiritually, intellectually and professionally.

Prior to this, I thought of the chaplain role as identical to that of a parish pastor, only in an institutional setting. I was to learn that the two ministries are as much different as alike. The chaplaincy requires a whole set of skills used in a lesser degree by most parish pastors. The traditional parish ministry role puts emphasis on group activities such as preaching, teaching and leading worship. The hospital chaplain ministers mostly one-on-one to people in various levels of crisis.

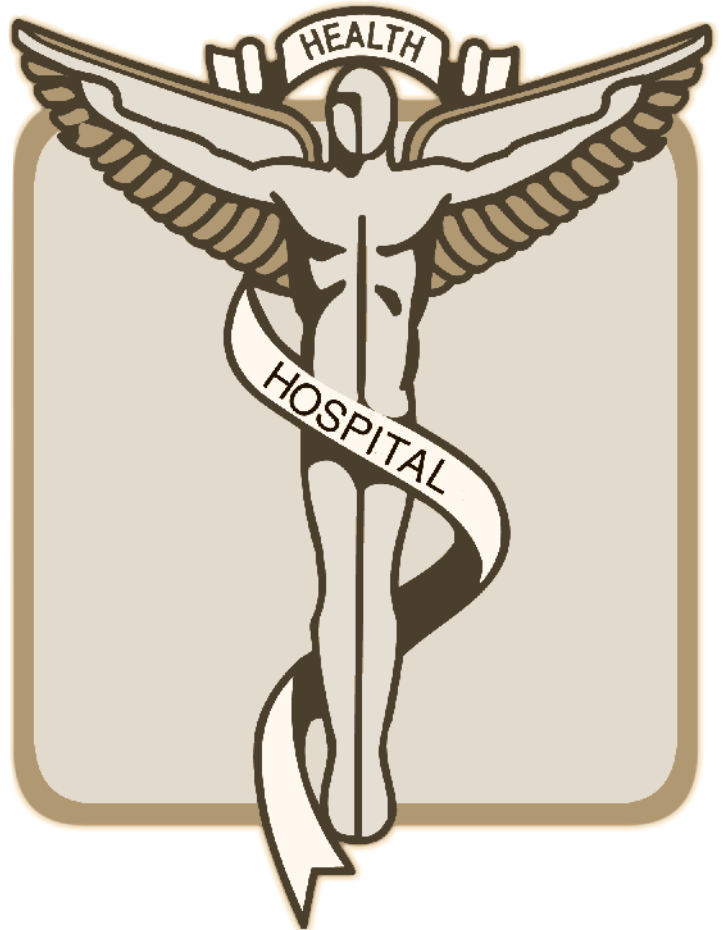
This has some real advantages. A chaplain ministers to people at the point of their need. They know they are in need. The chaplain gets the privilege of helping them to look to our all-sufficient, ever-loving God.

This can be overwhelming, even frightening. When I was called to the first few traumas, I felt like the proverbial deer caught in the headlights. What do I do? What do I say? I have since learned to minister in some of the most horrific events in people's lives.

So, do I now always know what to say? No, but I have learned that it is not so important to put the situation into the proper theological perspective as it is to be the presence of Christ with them: to be there, to hold their hands, to accept them, to listen, to pray and cry with them, and to remind them that God is with them.

When someone asks, "Why did God take my loved one?" the pastor in me wants to sit them down and explain to them about the effects of sin on all of creation, God's perfect and permissive will, etc. The chaplain in me knows that this is not the time for such an explanation. What the person really wants to know is, "Where is God in all of this, and how will I cope?"

I don't have all the answers; but I can reassure them that God knows them, loves them, and is here with them. He accepts them where they are, with all



their questions; and even though we do not now understand, if we trust in God, He will in his time carry us through.

As pastors, we get used to preaching and teaching. As chaplains, we have to learn to listen and allow people to lead us to their hurts, questions and fears. By being the loving and accepting presence of Christ, we hope to help them discover God in their situation.

I love the ministry of teaching and preaching, and I love my newfound ministry as a chaplain. They truly compliment and build upon one another. Thank God I have the privilege of serving in both.

— *Pastor Don Voorhees*
St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran
Dannebrog, Neb.

TTA University of trusting God

“We are a university in which God has been teaching us to trust Him. Yes, we could be called the ‘University of Trusting God.’”

These were the words of Siimon Haamer, academic dean at Tartu Academy of Theology (TTA) in Estonia, in a recent conversation.

“The continuation of TTA is a miracle,” said a senior student at the academy. Indeed, beyond the expectations of the optimistic, as well as the dire predictions of some critics, Tartu Academy of Theology celebrated its 10-year anniversary in February in a special conference held in the university city of Tartu. The conference was a tribute to the faithfulness of God in providing for this fledgling institution.



Dr. Francis Monseth
Dean, FLS

Speakers at the February conference represented several countries including Denmark, Finland and the U.S. Representing East European Missions Network (EEMN) and Lutheran-Estonian American Friends (LEAF) was AFLC Pastor Tim Hinrichs, presently teaching at

the University of Ostrava along the Polish/Czech border. His lecture was entitled, “The Foundation for American Christians Today.” Among the Estonian speakers was the wife of the nation’s president, Dr. Ingrid Ruutel. Her husband, Arnold Ruutel, serves on the advisory council of the academy.

In 1992 a group of eight Lutheran pastors from America visited Estonia in an effort to encourage the long-repressed and persecuted churches in that nation. This group, among them AFLC pastors Robert Lee, Don Richman, Mel Meyer and Martin Horn, met Pastor Eenok Haamer, who shared with them his concern to begin a Christian university. He envisioned a school that would be a catalyst for spiritual restoration and revival as its graduates took their place as Christian workers and witnesses in various walks of life. The pastors were inspired by their fellowship with Pastor Haamer and pledged to help raise the needed funds to begin just such a school. The words of one of the American pastors, Bob Rieth, were of special encouragement to Eenok Haamer and have con-

tinued to be during the first 10 years of existence: “Pastor Haamer, we believe in you!”

In February 1993, the first two-week session was conducted with some 35 students enrolled. I was the first guest instructor during that session and subsequently returned to Eastern Europe with my family in September of the same year on a sabbatical leave from my work at the Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis. During that year, I traveled regularly from neighboring Latvia to teach during the two-week sessions. My wife, Ellen, and I have returned to Estonia almost every year since 1993 to teach at the academy in Tartu as well as other schools in Eastern Europe.

The student body of the TTA is primarily Lutheran but is also represented by students from Baptist, Free Church and Methodist groups. The students are charged no tuition but give voluntarily toward the expenses of running the school as they are able. It is estimated that the cost of educating one student each year is about \$2,000. EEMN has initiated “Helping One” program, which provides an opportunity for interested individuals or congregations to help “adopted” student(s) cover their share of paying the schools’ operating expenses. This program represents a much-needed way for the academy to maintain its program financially.

When one considers the miraculous way God has sustained and used TTA during its first decade of trusting Him, there is much cause for praise and thanksgiving. When one considers also the many consecrated graduates during these first years who have now taken their places in Estonian society as pastors, Bible teachers, social workers, counselors, military chaplains, youth workers, public media and communication specialists, etc., there is great reason to rejoice in God’s faithfulness in blessing the teaching of His Word unto the renewing of His Church.

Let us continue to remember the wonderful ministry of TTA in our prayers and, as the Lord prompts, the opportunity afforded us in “Helping One.”

To learn more about Helping One, contact Eastern European Mission Network at 9072 Lyndale Ave. South, Suite 165, Bloomington, MN 55420. Or email at ee mn@usfamily.net.

World Missions **Brazil**

Paul and Becky Abel spend summer furlough visiting churches in the United States

Our short three and one-half month furlough whizzed by with wonderful moments in the U.S. as we visited our supporting churches and individuals. We work together in fulfilling God's call to minister in Brazil. Some send, some pray, some go, and God's faithfulness completes His work through His weak but willing servants.

We praise Him for the churches and ministries that have been established in Brazil. In Curitiba, three national Brazilian pastors presently serve three Free Lutheran congregations. The ARCA Bible Camp provides a wonderful retreat area for these congregations as well as for many other evangelical churches. With the construction of the new pavilion, there will be a covered area for sports events and a large meeting place for big events involving all three of the churches. We are very grateful to those who have contributed to this project, and we look forward to raising the rest of the funds to complete the roof and floor. This area will also be used for VBS and for the outreach to the poor families of our community. Perhaps the Lord will open doors in the future for the establishment of a Christian daycare at the ARCA.

As we return to Brazil we anticipate cooperating with a new church plant. The opportunities to reach out and preach the gospel are endless. We continue to count on your support and God's provision as we reach out in His name to the nation of Brazil. We extend an invitation to our Free Lutheran family to visit Brazil and participate with us in what God is doing there. You can be used by God to spread the gospel in faraway places through your giving, your prayers and your going.

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our



TOP: A new pavilion is under construction at the ARCA Bible Camp in Curitiba, Brazil. The structure will provide a covered area for sporting events and a large meeting place for all three local churches to meet in at once. Funding is still needed to finish the roof and flooring.

ABOVE: Pastor Paul and Becky Abel

Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you" (II Thessalonians 2:16-3:1).

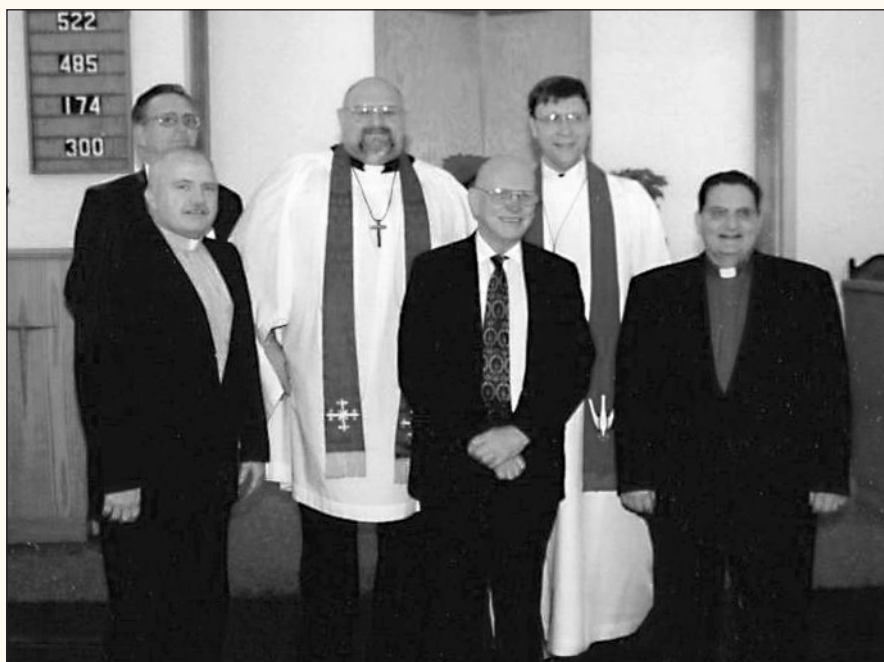
— *Pastor Paul and Becky Abel*

Lissow installed at Deshler, Neb.

Pastor Alex Lissow was installed at Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Deshler, Neb., on Jan. 12. AFLC President Bob Lee delivered the message at the morning worship service and presided at the installation. Guest speakers for the installation were Pastor Ollie Olson of California, Pastor Richard Larson of Fairbury, Neb., who served as interim pastor at Abiding Word, and Pastor Jerome Nikunun of Bertrand, Neb., who served Abiding Word.

Pastor Olson read from I Timothy 1, and Pastors Larson and Nikunun read from Ephesians 4. Pastor Lee's installation counsel to the congregation was based on I Corinthians 16:13-14.

Pastor Alex and his wife, Barb, previously served



the AFLC Montana congregations of Faith Free Lutheran, Brockton, and Bethel Free Lutheran, Culbertson.

An **AFLBS choir reunion** from the classes of 1968-85 will be 2 p.m. July 13 at the AFLC headquarters chapel. The reunion will honor Don Rodvold, AFLBS music director during those years. Rehearsals will be from 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. July 12 and from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. July 13. For more information, contact Lois Forde at (360) 659-4686 or write llforde@aol.com.

Pastor Tim Skramstad, Eagan, Minn., received a doctor of ministry degree on May 31 from Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. His degree was in church leadership and his thesis was entitled: "Creating Policies and Guidelines for the Application Process for Prospective Military Chaplains from the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations." Pastor Skramstad serves Living Word Lutheran Church, Eagan, and is the director of military chaplains for the AFLC.

Pastor Lynn Qualm was installed May 4 as pastor of United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated at the service.

Pastor Roy Johnson was

installed June 8 as pastor of the joint parish at Bethesda Lutheran, Mizpah, Minn., and Hope Lutheran, Northome, Minn.

Pastor David Skordahl retired as assistant pastor at Zion-Sarpsborg, Tordenskjold and Kvam parishes, Dalton, Minn. Skordahl, along with his wife, Cheryl, served in Dalton for 11 years, first serving as senior pastor. The Skordahls now live in St. Michael, Minn., and Pastor Skordahl plans to work as an interim pastor. The Dalton churches continue to look for a second full-time pastor. A celebration in the Skordahl's honor was held June 8.

Pastor Les Galland, Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Wash., will retire in August. His last service, Aug. 17, will include a celebration service and luncheon. Pastor Les and his wife, Jan, plan to move to Shakopee, Minn. Members of Calvary continue their search for a new pastor.

Pastor Brent Logeman, a new graduate of AFLTS, was ordained and installed on June 1 at Faith Lutheran, Metropolis, Ill. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee accepted an application for affiliation with the AFLC from members of **Prince of Peace Lutheran**, Kernville, Calif. The formerly independent congregation is located in central California, northeast of Bakersfield.

Pastor Rich Carr, a 2003 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained June 22 at Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. He will be installed as co-pastor July 13 at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Pastor Nathan Hoff was ordained June 29 at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif. He has accepted a call to serve Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., starting in July.

Pastor Matt Steendahl, a 2003 AFLTS graduate, will be ordained and installed July 6 at Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.

Correction: Pastor Michael Peterson, Ortle, S.D., was the author of "What if my pastor sins?" in the June issue. His name was inadvertently left off.

Four seminarians present final research projects

Returning from their yearlong internships, four seminarians presented their research projects during the last week of classes at AFLTS.

The internship workshop included a presentation by Richard Carr titled, "The Evangelism Outreach of Hope Lutheran Church." Carr spent his internship under Pastor Tom Brock at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

Brent Logeman presented a project titled, "The History of Faith Lutheran Church: What We Can Learn." Logeman spent his internship at Faith Lutheran, Metropolis, Ill.

Wade Mobley presented a project titled, "The Evangelism Potential of a Distinctly Christian Preschool." Mobley spent his internship under Pastor Bill Bartlett, senior pastor of Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif.



Matt Steendahl presents his research project during the last week of classes at AFLTS. Steendahl and three classmates graduated May 17.

Matthew Steendahl presented a project titled, "The Ministry of Christian Education at Elim Lutheran." Steendahl spent his internship under Pastor Mark Molstre in Lake Stevens, Wash.

Vision of Glory hosts National Day of Prayer event

Members of Vision of Glory, Plymouth, Minn., hosted a National Day of Prayer Breakfast on May 1 for the Twin Cities area.

Special speaker for the event was Walter Hilgenberg, a former player with the Minnesota Vikings



Walter Hilgenberg

"I'm a new creation in Christ Jesus," said Hilgenberg. "I'm thrilled by what has happened in my life. I've been to four losing Super Bowl parties, and they're bummers. But the Lord has promised a banquet table in heaven and a celebration that will be better than any winning team's Super Bowl party."

Mistress of Ceremonies for the event was Minnesota's First Lady Judge Mary Pawlenty.

Dr. Mark Herringshaw, pastor of Vision of Glory, led prayers prior to the breakfast.

This year, the event included a prayer walk the evening prior to the prayer breakfast, when attendees cir-



Don Sjostrom, Pastor Mark Herringshaw, Judy Johnson, Plymouth mayor, County Commissioner Penny Steele, and co-chairs Dar Sjostrom and Helen Oslund.

cled the church, stopping at seven prayer stations located nearby.

AFLBS 2003 graduation, breaking

CLOCKWISE: Seminarian Wade Mobley is congratulated by AFLC President Robert Lee. The seminary chorus sang at graduation. Micah Russum is greeted by his family members. Gola Dynneson graduates with her grandchildren, Kayla Ramse and David Kennedy.



Opposite page, clockwise from top right: Construction on the AFLBS Heritage Hall began in late May and on June 10 and 11, the footings were poured. AFLBS Dean Pastor Jim Johnson takes part in a groundbreaking ceremony on May 17. Justin Collins, a graduating AFLBS senior, volunteered an afternoon to help plant trees on campus. During the first week of June, sod arrived and volunteers and employees helped to begin the project. The AFLBS Concert Choir sang during the groundbreaking ceremony. The symbolic shovels were brought out for the groundbreaking ceremony.

ground, construction



AFLBS hosts summer reunion

The AFLBS summer alumni reunion is set for Aug. 9-11. Held every other year, the alumni gathering this summer features a choir reunion directed by AFLBS' own Jerry Nelson, a summer picnic, a softball tournament and Golf Scramble.

Over the past 37 years, many students have come to experience life on the AFLBS campus. For those of you who remember it well, and for those of you who have begun to forget, you are invited back. It will be a special year for alumni from the following eras: 1971-73, 1981-83 and 1997-99.

The softball tournament begins at 9 a.m. Aug. 9. Two fields have been reserved at Zachary Playfields, one mile north of the AFLBS campus at County Road 9. Each team is guaranteed three games. Suggested donations of \$200 per team will go to student scholarships and summer team support. To register, contact Pastor Jim Johnson at jamesl@afcl.org or Mark Johnson at markj@afcl.org or call the AFLBS office at 763-544-9501.

Two choir rehearsals are planned at 4 p.m. Aug. 9 and 3 p.m. Aug. 10 to prepare for a worship celebration at 4 p.m. Aug. 10. Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, will bring the message.

The annual Golf Scramble begins at 8 a.m. Aug. 11 at CreeksBend Golf Course near New Prague. Suggested donations are \$65 a person, \$250 for a foursome and \$250 for a hole sponsorship. A goal of \$12,000 has been set for this fund-raiser to benefit scholarships for needy students and summer teams. To enter a team or to be placed on a team, contact Cory Buck at 763-544-9501 or email coryb@afcl.org.

Alumni are invited to stay on campus for \$10 a person per night or \$20 for a family per night.

Contact AFLBS for more information: 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: 763-544-9501. Email: aflbs@afcl.org

FLY Convention July 21-26

Days remain before the beginning of the 2003 youth convention in Estes Park, Colo. Please keep in prayer students, counselors, speakers and the many volunteers working

to make this event possible. Pray for travel safety and for changed hearts.



AFLC memorials — May 2003

Department given to
... in memory of

Vision 2004

Mona Sorem
Eberhard Helling
Michael Lovdahl
Raymond Davidson
Elgin Mortenson
Pastor Gerald Mundfrom
Avis Rohde
Rose Mackey

AFLBS

Marilyn Wigtil
Lula Ness
Kenneth Hoffert
Pastor Gerald Mundfrom
John Billberg

AFLTS

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom
Lula Ness

World Missions

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom

Maynard Molskness
Pastor Vince Will

Home Missions

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom
Jan Fatland
Henry Ness
Nelmie Korhonene
Mrs. Herman Johnson
Jeanette Walker
Curtis Hunter

General Fund

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom

Evangelism

Jeanette Walker

MTI

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom

Parish Education

Pastor Gerald Mundfrom

... in Honor of

Vision 2004

Ron and Ruth Quick

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (5 months) – January 1 - May 31, 2003

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$305,568.00	\$24,086.70	\$114,738.05	38
Youth Ministries . . .	48,154.00	2,784.57	18,400.76	38
Parish Education . . .	90,907.00	4,694.63	29,749.93	33
Seminary	150,070.00	11,139.15	56,055.56	37
Bible School	263,356.00	26,284.24	93,660.57	36
Home Missions.	305,087.00	14,330.40	100,532.94	33
Church Extension . . .	28,945.00	2,452.85	6,166.64	21
World Missions.	247,082.00	14,093.35	83,056.37	34
Personal Support . . .	301,156.00	27,484.01	152,129.03	51
TOTALS	\$1,740,325.00	\$127,349.90	\$654,489.85	38
TOTALS 2002	\$1,521,284.00	\$133,649.94	\$684,504.35	45
Goal 42%				

The Evangelism Department received \$5,735.64 in May.

Editorial Help them fall in love

A recent issue of *USA Today* had an article about a book called “The Unauthorized Guide to Choosing a Church.” All I know about the book is what I read in the newspaper, but I may go out and get it out of curiosity.

Carmen Renee Berry is the author of this “handbook on how, and why, to find the right pew for you.”



Craig Johnson
Editor

Berry grew up in the Church of the Nazarene, left the church for a few years, then spent some time searching for a church and eventually ended up attending a Church of the Nazarene once again.

During her time of searching, Berry realized, “I needed a church, a community of believers. I needed to live in my faith and

visit my doubts. Something happens there that simply doesn’t

when you are alone in prayer or on the Internet.”

The article shares some of the advice Berry gives people in what to consider when trying to decide what church to attend. She encourages people to examine the church’s key doctrines. That is something people too often give little consideration to when looking for a church. The cleanliness of the bathrooms and the quality of the paint job in the nursery may have some importance and be an indicator of a congregation’s priorities. They don’t, however, impact the future of the church and the people who attend nearly as much as the doctrine it holds to and teaches.

Berry also encourages her readers to consider “how the church is run, locally or globally.” How the church is governed and structured does matter. One of the fundamental reasons we exist as an Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is because of our belief as to how congregations are best organized and work together and our emphasis on the freedom of the local congregation.

The article closes with a final quote from Berry’s book: “If a church doesn’t help you fall in love with God, then it’s not a church that knows God.”

A church that helps you fall in love with God ... that would be great if each of our congregations could be described that way. Helping people to fall more and

more in love with Jesus is our calling and mission. Jesus said the most important commandment is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, NIV).

We help people to fall in love with God by telling them of God’s great love for them. Max Lucado in “A Love Worth Giving” writes, “We preachers do a good job of telling people to love each other — but we skip the first step. We forget to tell them how loved they are. That’s like telling them to write a check without making a deposit in their accounts! How can you give what you don’t know you have?”

“We love because he first loved us” (I John 4:19). “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (I John 3:16). “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16).

We should not hold back on telling them of the love of God, as though it is a prize they must earn. We must tell them of Christ’s great and unmerited love right away for it is the source of power and motivation to live and to love.

We want to be sure to tell people when they’re young of the Lord’s great love for them. May our congregations, youth groups and homes be places where young people are falling in love with Jesus.

Our opportunities to share with young people can seem pretty limited

at times. They grow up so fast. Therefore, we need to be certain we cover the essentials. There are many good things I would like the young people I have the privilege of working with to know and to do, but most of all I want them to love Jesus and know His incredible love for them.

To paraphrase I Corinthians 13 — If we have students who can make beautiful music, speak eloquently and give an impressive sounding testimony, but they don’t love Jesus, it’s just a lot of noise. If we have young people who can defeat unbelievers in arguments about religious matters and always win at Bible trivia, but they don’t love Jesus, it’s of little value. If we have a youth group that stands up to evil, says no to all they should say no to and makes costly sacrifices, but they don’t love Jesus, it’s nothing.

Growth in abilities and accomplishments, in knowledge and in numbers, can all be nice, but growth in our love for the Lord and our understanding of His great love for us is truly great gain.

**Most of all I want
them to love
Jesus and know
His incredible love
for them.**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

THE ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

What does your label say?

Oh! It has the label! You know the one: the logo on the front of the shirt, the mark on the side of the shoe, the name on the shopping bag, the emblem on the front of the car, the mark that represents quality.

Our families carry a mark too. It is labeled by our actions and traditions. It is who our family chooses to be. Joshua charged the Israelites, "If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Who does your family choose? What is your family known for? What label does it carry? What traditions have left its mark?

Many families choose to make

the Association Retreat Center part of their summer tradition. They choose to take a spiritual vacation together. Rather than going to Canada fishing, scuba diving in Florida, or even a trip to Disneyland; they take time away in the countryside of western Wisconsin to focus on the teaching of God's Word and spending time with one another. They choose their free time to be filled with things of God. Jesus has left a mark on their family.

Year after year, 23 years for some, people keep coming back to the ARC. Families make Bible camp a tradition because they believe it to be one of the most valuable things they could do with their summer. There are single parents who scrape their pennies to bring their children to camp. There are people who come alone. There are grandparents who give the gift of family camp to all of their children and grandchildren. They have their own little reunion

within the camp! What a treasure to see grandchildren sitting on the laps of their grandparents at an evening session singing praises together or a grandparent bringing a grandson to class. These families are known for their commitment to the Lord and the strength of their family. Some may not know the name of a family at camp, but they recognize the mark of Jesus on them.

What will you choose for your family? We invite you to *come away and rest awhile* at the Association Retreat Center. Make Bible camp a family tradition and allow Jesus to put His mark on your family.

- Family Camp: July 27-Aug. 1
- Family Retreat: October 3-5
- Classic Retreat (55 & older): October 3-5

— Pam Olson