

THE LUTHERAN **AMBASSADOR**

SEPTEMBER 2003



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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Encouraging Word

A thistle in your bag

**“There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve.
And there are different ways that God works through people
but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do” (I
Corinthians 12:5-6, NCV).**

Having grown up on a farm, I had some very special opportunities to marvel at the wonder of God’s creation.

The golden fields of grain and the green fields of hay spoke of God’s gift of life and provision. The acres

of woods and the beauty of a tranquil lake gave me quiet thinking time — time to contemplate the goodness of our Lord and all He has to offer.



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

As a youth, I took many walks through the woods, sat on the shore by the lake, and soaked in the awesomeness of my surroundings. As all my senses came alive, I wrote poetry, and I praised God.

As an adult, I’ve also had opportunities to return to this place of my childhood. I have captured on film some of God’s handwriting in nature. I especially love the sunsets. One lovely autumn day, the leaves were turning crimson and gold. I sat by the lakeshore, my camera clicking in the scenery that lay before me.

When the pictures were developed, they showed many stages of the sunset — colors and shadows changing in a matter of seconds. All the pictures were beautiful, but one stuck out as I thumbed through them. The sun was just going down behind the tree line across the lake.

The sky was subdued. In the foreground stood a single large thistle silhouetted against the lake.

Without the thistle, this picture would have been much like the others. The shoreline, the sun reflecting in the water, the trees, and even the subdued sky were all very necessary for the completeness of the image, but it was the thistle that caught my eye.

We are all a part of God’s plan in creation. And like the picture, we cannot all be the trees, the water, the sun or the sky. Likewise, we cannot all be the thistles that added the special touch to this panorama. He has given each of us unique and special gifts to share.

As we dig a little deeper into our time and talent bags, we may be surprised by what God has put in them. What we may have thought of as a simple thistle in our bags might just be the gift that makes the church picture complete. Together we are the body of Christ, and each one of us is a part of that body — called by Him to serve. We are each important in God’s sight, and He has not forgotten to fill a single bag.

Oh Lord, from the rising to the setting of the sun, we praise Your name. Thank you for giving each of us different gifts to do Your work here on earth. Stir us to use those gifts to Your honor and glory. Make us aware, Lord, so that we do not overlook even one of Your great gifts. Amen.

SOUND BITES

On the Free Lutheran Youth Convention 2003

We have been created as a people to worship our God ... We hope God will be glorified with all we do and say.

— *Ben Monseth*

Everything we do this week is going to point to the cross ... Your only hope is Jesus Christ crucified.

— *Joshua Skogerboe*

I hope that you see yourselves as God sees you.

— *Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt*

The power of God is available for us to live extraordinary lives.

— *Pastor Mark Molstre*



FINISHED &

— Pastor Craig Johnson
Editor

The 2003 Free Lutheran Youth Convention held July 21 to 26 in Estes Park, Colo., was about beginnings and endings. “It is finished” — words Jesus proclaimed from the cross — was the theme of the week. The more than 900 young people and nearly 500 adults at the convention — total registration was 1,439 — heard how separation from God can be finished because of Jesus’ completed work. The good news of Christ’s finished work resulted in numerous beginnings. A number of people began a relationship with God. Others began a new level of commitment to the Savior, a new passion for serving the Lord and a new zeal for sharing the good news of Jesus.

LEARNING IN THE MORNING

Mornings at the convention were spent exploring God’s Word in large group sessions and small group electives. Confidence in the Word of God led to a spirit of anticipation. “This is a power-packed week because the Word of God is being proclaimed,” declared Pastor Mark Molstre, one of the morning Bible study teachers.

Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt expressed confidence in the long-range impact of students spending time in the Scripture. He told the students in the Bible study he led, “You are the greatest potential for ministry and advancing the kingdom of God today.”

On one of the mornings, Pam Stenzel shared with the group on following God’s commands regarding sexual



BEGINNING

behavior. Stenzel travels extensively speaking on sexual abstinence and character issues. She challenged those at the convention to be men and women of integrity: "Go home and change your world."

During the small group elective times, students were given a choice from a wide range of presentations. They could learn about issues such as keeping a passion for God going after the convention, dealing with addictions, keys to proper and healthy relationships, helping a friend who threatens suicide, and growing up in a single-parent home. Students could also explore ministry possibilities such as chalk art, language camps, short-term missions and sports as ministry. Teams from the AFLBS also shared during this hour. Teaching on the biblical evidence for the truth of creation was presented, and discussions about worship were held.

FUN IN THE AFTERNOON

During the afternoons campers had the chance to take advantage of a variety of recreational opportunities available at the YMCA of the Rockies. Groups went hiking in the mountains. Basketball and volleyball tournaments were conducted and other sporting activities took place as well such as soccer and flag football in nearby fields. In a craft room, students were presented with many things to do. Miniature golf was a popular activity, as was simply hanging out with old friends and new ones.

The afternoons were also the time for choir practice, drama presentations, music concerts and a talent show.



WORSHIP IN THE EVENING

The evening services were a time of worship, which included much music with a variety of accompanying instruments. Visuals with words and graphics were displayed on three different large screens. Worship times also included other elements such as prayer, Scripture reading, an offering, choir numbers, unison Scripture readings and a reciting of the Apostles' Creed. As part of the worship time each evening a different speaker brought the message.

Bruce Marchiano, an actor who portrayed Jesus in a

film based on the Gospel of Matthew, shared the message the first night of the convention. He shared a clip from the video and told of the impact playing Jesus had on his life. He had known the story his whole life, but it was during the time of playing that role that he "realized what really happened. It hit me what He did for me."

At the end of each service people were given the opportunity to come forward. Counselors gathered in a prayer room ready to meet with all those who came. Sixty-one people gave an indication in the prayer room that they were giving their life to Christ for the first time. Two hundred and seven individuals came forward to renew their relationship or pray about a special request.

Pastor Jerry Nelson, who served in the prayer room and as Intervention Resources coordinator, stated, "I was most impressed by the spiritual atmosphere at the convention ... many of the cases that we saw on an individual basis revolved around the person wanting to deepen their spiritual relationship with the Lord."

Following the services were the afterglows, times when the youths were encouraged to share what God was doing in their lives. Jeremy Erickson, who led the afterglow time, told the students, "It's so good to hear your stories."

Young people shared about God helping them through trials. They told of non-Christian families not allowing them to go to church, of sinful habits they needed to break, of terrible things that had been

done to them. They also shared, though, of how God had been faithful. They told of being set free. One encouraged the rest, "If something bad happens to you, trust in God. He can revive your dead heart." Another stated simply, "Prayer works."

Others told of new life and new beginnings in their relationship with the Lord. "I realized I needed Jesus, and I gave my life to Him," was one testimony. Another said, "I committed myself to Christ." One declared, "I thank Jesus He gave me another life."

Young people left the convention with praise and determination. They sang songs such as "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has been good to me," taken from Psalm



OPPOSITE PAGE
TOP: Junior high and high school boys and girls packed a small room to hear Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt talk about dating relationships.
BOTTOM: Pam Stenzel sat down with a group of girls following her talk on Thursday night when she challenged girls to step out of the boat like Peter and surrender themselves to God.

THIS PAGE
LEFT: Pastor Jim Johnson, dean of AFLBS, surveys students as they wait in the lunch line.
BELOW LEFT: A group of students from Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., relaxes during the afternoon recreation time.
BELOW RIGHT: Lyle Forde, Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash., directs the FLY choir.



13. They joyfully stated, "I can't explain how great His love is." Others said, "I have learned so much here that will help me stay committed to Christ." The praise of another was, "God has been so awesome to me in my life."

They had a determination to go back to their hometowns and stay committed to Jesus, faithful to Him and witnesses to the good news. "If you have a chance to witness for Christ don't pass it up" was the challenge one student gave to the rest. "I want to be a light for Jesus," was the hope of another. In that spirit they closed with a song that stated, "We are not afraid."

FLY 2003 is finished, but the work of God in and through the lives of those who were there is far from over.



IT IS FINISHED



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ABOVE: Pastor Jason Holt, Fergus Falls, Minn., and AFLC Youth Ministries Director Pastor Kevin Olson touch base outside the FLY office.



ELECTIONS

[left to right]

Devotional Life Secretary: Chad Jankord

President: Jason Holt

Second Vice President: Daniel Keinanen

First Vice President: Cory Buck

Secretary: Andrea Monseth

MEETING THE SAVIOR AT THE CROSS

We were in awe of how the Lord was at work during the week. We prayed for a great week, but as Jesus does time and time again, He exceeded our expectations. We were eager to see students deal with the reality of their sins and meet the real Savior who died on the cross. But it is still so amazing to see the fruit of hundreds of teens coming to Christ. It was also encouraging to see Christian students coming to their second or third convention and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. One recent high school graduate, who attended FLY for the third time, said that he experienced significant spiritual growth this week at FLY. We give all the praise and glory to Jesus for all that He has done!

— Pastor Jason Holt
Fergus Falls, Minn.



ABOVE: Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt leads an elective class called "The Dating Game."

FLY VIDEOS

Want to know what the buzz is about? Or maybe you want to share with a friend what you learned at FLY. Whether you missed the FLY convention or you just can't get enough of the Word of God shared through FLY speakers, AFLC Youth Ministries can help you out. Five evening sessions and four large group workshops are now available on VHS tape for a total cost of \$30. Included in the set are evening speakers Bruce Marchiano, Pastor Kirk Militzer, Pastor Michael Brandt, Pastor Robert Lee and Pastor Steve Lombardo. The evening session led by Pam Stenzel may or may not be available. Videotapes of morning workshops include speakers Pam Stenzel, Merlin Satrom, Dr. Francis Monseth and Wonkemi Gongar. Individual videos are available for \$8. Video CDs compiling the daily highlight videos are also available for \$4 plus an additional \$1 for shipping. Contact Tara Hill at (763) 545-5631 to order the videos or for more information.

Our President Writes **Echoes**

It was my privilege to attend the AFLC youth convention at Estes Park, Colo., in July, and I decided to use this column to offer a few observations for our church family's consideration. Many of you may be aware that the youth convention is the largest gathering of AFLC people — including about 1,500 this year — but you may be surprised to learn that about one-third of these were adults, which means that this equals or exceeds most annual conference attendance. Also, I have not seen a total for the number of pastors there, but suspect

was the large number of counselors available in the dorm rooms, etc. It is almost exhausting to even think of all the preparations and organization needed to operate such a gathering, and we are surely indebted to Pastor Kevin Olson, Tara Hill, the FLY officers and convention committee, the musicians and technicians, as well as to numerous other capable staff members who worked so hard before and during the days at Estes Park.

I was grateful for the prayerful worship emphasis of the music. Most of the songs were new to me, but the FLY committee had made a concerted effort to acquaint the youths with the music before the convention through a CD that was distributed to each congregation. It embarrasses me to think of the froth that so often characterized the songs that were sung during my generation's youth conventions and Bible camps ... "Deep and Wide," "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy," "Father Abraham Had Many Sons," and including some like "John Jacob Jingleheimer Smith," which lacked even a pretense of spiritual content. Back then, our song leaders had us smiling, standing up, sitting down, and going through other strange gyrations, and — no question about it — we had fun. But one would be hard-pressed to define or defend this as worship.

The messages that I heard were marked by a solid sin and grace emphasis, and I heard good comments on the Bible studies and workshops, too. We should be grateful, too, for the frank and open manner of such speakers as Pam Stenzel who dealt with the sexual issues of today. The Spirit of God was moving in our midst, as evidenced by the response to the invitations, and many shared my impression that there was a significant concern on the part of our saved youth to be more consistent disciples of Jesus Christ. The planning committee received several helpful suggestions that should make FLY 2005 an even stronger convention, and I look forward to being there, if the Lord tarries.

Our youths are part of the church today as well as the church tomorrow, and I thank the Lord for every effort within the AFLC to win and hold them for Jesus Christ.



Robert Lee



Members of the 2003 FLY worship band lead praise songs prior to a session at the Estes Park convention.

that it may be close to the registration at our annual January retreat.

What does this mean? I suggest that we need to consider the FLY convention a truly representative AFLC gathering and not only a youth meeting. It was exciting to meet people there who are not involved in our fellowship in any other way, as well as to renew relationships with Bible school alumni and others who are well acquainted with our church family. It was encouraging to look out over the crowds and remember that here are most of the future Bible school students, seminarians, pastors, and missionaries. And I was reminded to be hopeful and thankful.

FLY 2003 was an unusually trouble-free youth convention, and I was told that one reason for this

Why do^{n't} you go to Sunday school?

“We don’t have many high school students coming to Sunday school.” That’s the lament of many of our congregations. What’s the reason for that?

In an effort to find out we asked some of the young people at the recent Free Lutheran Youth Convention.

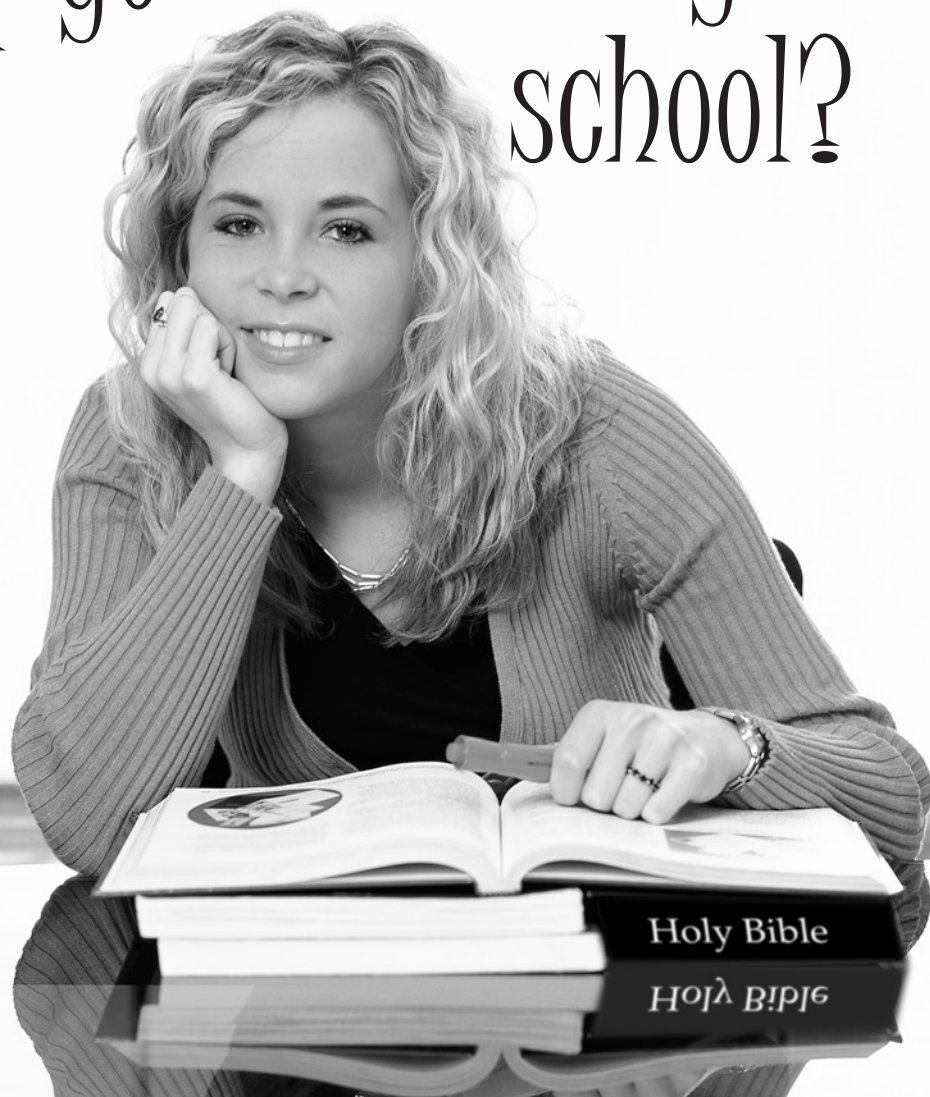
“We don’t have a Sunday school at our church,” was the response of one. Others said their congregation had a Sunday school but nothing really for students their age. “They have stuff for the little kids and the older people, but nothing for those of us in between.”

Others had problems with work schedules. Because they are working at service jobs or entry-level positions, they are scheduled to work on Sunday mornings. They feel they need the job but can’t get Sunday morning off. Others told of being involved in some type of service and ministry at the church at the same time that Sunday school is going on. Some work with things like preparing some of the visuals for the worship service. Others work in the area of kids’ music.

Some admitted they could go but they don’t want to. They don’t go because of how the class is conducted and how they’re made to feel. “The people make me feel bad about myself,” was the candid comment of one student. Others told of teachers in need of more training, classes being poorly taught and Sunday schools falling apart. Some told of teachers not being open to discussion.

But the news isn’t all bad. Several students had positive things to say about their experiences in Sunday school at their local church. One middle-schooler who regularly attends Sunday school said that it’s her “relationship with God” and her desire “to learn more” that keeps her coming back week after week. And what is her favorite part? “Studying the Bible.”

Another middle-schooler wrote of the impact her teacher has had on her through Sunday school classes. “It’s fun and our Sunday school teacher is awesome.” She said it was the discussion that kept her coming back on Sunday mornings.



Of course, it helps to have “fun activities,” “singing” and “friends” as motivation to attend — and parents who make that trip to class a priority. “Sometimes my parents make me, but I usually like going to learn about God’s Word,” wrote a middle school boy from Amery, Wis.

For one student, it is the choice of study that keeps her coming back. “We talk about interesting topics like evolution that we can apply to our everyday life,” said the Iowa high schooler.

For two other students, their deep relationships with Christ and a desire to share that relationship with others their age keeps them interested in Sunday school.

“I like to fall in love with Jesus more and more,” said a high school girl. “(I like to) learn that God loves me for me. Also, sharing my troubles that I deal with everyday in high school.”

“I like to learn more about God and how to grow in my relationship with Him,” said another high school student from Radcliffe, Iowa. “I like talking and sharing about God with people my age.”



GROW UP IN GRACE

I was the new pastor in town. One day I was introduced to a man who mentioned that he used to attend the church I was now serving. In fact, he had been confirmed there. Then he added, “But I graduated.” Now I knew why I hadn’t seen him at worship.

I rather suspect there are many in our churches today who have the same mindset as my “graduated” friend. They may have attended Sunday school and confirmation classes in their early years. And some left while others stayed, perhaps attending church but having no desire to grow in grace.

In II Peter 3:18, growing in grace is not merely suggested, but commanded. It is not an option. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” *Grow* is in the present tense and means, “keep on growing.”

J.I. Packer writes: “Many Christians, however, seem not to grow in grace, nor to be concerned to grow in grace. Apparently they are content to mark time spiritually, or even to slip backward” (“Rediscovering Holiness,” p. 191). Could it be that those who do not grow have not heard the command, or, are imitating other Christians who do not seem concerned, or, have left their “first love” (Revelation 2:4)? Or perhaps, they have never been saved at all. Stuart Briscoe writes: “There are thousands of people who have absolutely no hunger or appetite for the Word of God ... No appetite can mean no life, and no life always means death” (“Living Dangerously,” p. 12).

For those spiritually dead, the need is for repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. It is to “... believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Salvation is God’s gracious work, finished at the cross. One must first *experience* the grace of God before one can then *expand* in the grace of God.

In Hebrews 5:11 the people are described as having “become dull of hearing.” The word *dull* means “no push” — slow, sluggish. When a person is spiritually dull there is no growth. The writer then says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant” (Hebrews 5:12-13).

How, then, does a believer grow in the Lord?

A BELIEVER TAKES SERIOUSLY GOD’S CONCERN FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

“... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians

2:12-13). These verses are not about working for your salvation. The work was done by Jesus at Calvary. Rather, these verses stress how to grow. Growth involves God’s part — He “works in” salvation. And, growth involves the believer’s part — you “work out” your salvation with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. “Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must *want* to grow, *decide* to grow, *make an effort* to grow, and *persist* in growing” (Rick Warren, “The Purpose Driven Life,” p. 179).

A BELIEVER KNOWS SPIRITUAL GROWTH MEANS A WILLINGNESS TO LIVE A SACRIFICIAL LIFE

The apostle Paul’s desire was “... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10). Paul wanted to grow, and he knew growth called for sacrifice. Jesus, of course, demonstrated true sacrificial love. His disciples must do the same. “The price of our redemption was the blood of the cross, which He willingly paid. But how many Christians seem self-seeking rather than self-sacrificing. There are thousands who go to church on Sunday, who toss a coin into the offering, who fulfill perfunctorily some service for the church, but how pitifully few Christians have anything of the sacrificial in their love for Christ, for fellow Christians, and for lost sinners” (Ruth Paxson, “The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian,” p. 124).

A BELIEVER KNOWS THAT GROWTH CULTIVATES CHARACTER

It is getting to know God through His Word, through trials and testings, through “seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ...” (Matthew 6:33). Character is cultivated by living the truth of God. John wrote: “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth” (III John 1:4).

God never intends for us to remain babies, physically and spiritually. Therefore, “... like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (I Peter 2:2-3).

— **Pastor Steve Lombardo**
Bethlehem Lutheran
Morris, Ill.



A LOOK AT THE HERITAGE SERIES

“CONVICTIONS, UNLESS DISCUSSED AND TAUGHT, DIE.”

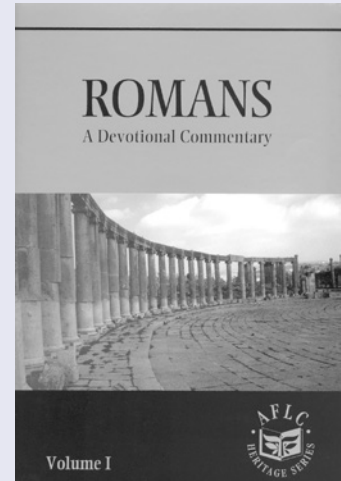
icated to the memory of Rev. John P. Strand, the first AFLC president. Topical chapters written by members of the AFLC answer questions such as: What does it mean to be a “free and living” congregation? What is the role of pastors and laypeople in a free church? How is the Lutheran Free Church related to the AFLC? How and why did the AFLC begin?

— **Marian Christopherson** *Parish Education Director* Why go to an Annual Conference? The book also contains a collection of photographs from early AFLC history, a section of historical documents including the *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work*, as well as selected writings by Rev. Strand from “The Lutheran Ambassador” and annual reports that are especially pertinent to congregational life. A correlating *Study Guide* leads readers through the book chapter by chapter and serves as a practical tool for small group discussions and classroom or personal study.

OTHER VOLUMES

Two other volumes in the Heritage Series are currently in process: a book of daily devotional readings by Rosenius and a newly translated collection of biographical writings on Lutheran pietists by Uuras Saarnivaara, originally published in Finnish. Another volume being considered includes some of the writings of Georg Sverdrup (founder of the Lutheran Free Church) that have not previously been translated.

Romans book \$20
Free and Living Congregations book \$20
Study Guide \$5



OTHER RESOURCES

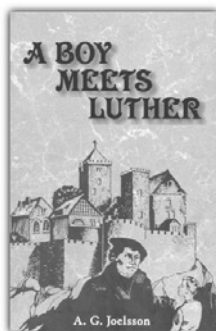
Running the Race of Faith

Encourage youths to persevere, living a life of faith and purpose, through this 8-week devotional journal based on Hebrews 12:1-2. Each chapter offers questions for reflection, scriptural encouragement, examples of faithful individuals of the Bible, and challenges for today. **\$6**



A Boy Meets Luther

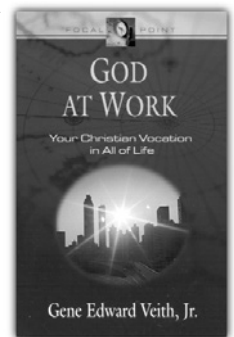
Join the adventures of the Pine Hill family as they learn to apply the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Means of Grace in their daily life situations — in the mountains, through a blizzard, at the train station, going to church, in a garden, swimming, and much more. Appropriate for family devotions, story time in Sunday school, or individual reading for children. **\$10**



God at Work

Christian Vocation in All of Life

What does it mean to be a Christian businessman or a Christian artist or a Christian construction worker? How can I serve God in my work? How can I know what I am supposed to do with my life? What does it mean to have a Christian family or to be a Christian citizen? Transfigure everyday life seeing vocation not as a burden placed on us or something else to fail at but rather as “a realm in which we can experience God’s love and grace, both in the blessings we receive from others and in the way God is working through us despite our failures.” **\$12** (Downloadable study guide also available for classroom or personal use.)



One God/many gods

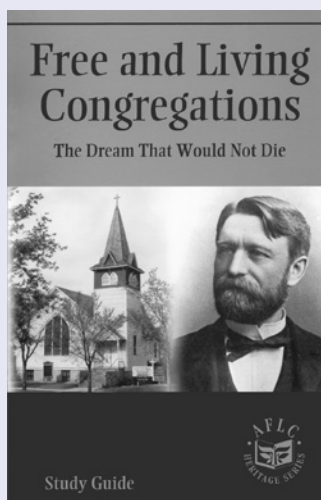
Bible Studies for Postmodern Times

Our culture is marked by a trend toward extreme toleration, including affirmation of all expressions of religion and personal spirituality.

These words were penned by Rev. John Strand more than 25 years ago. They are words that convey the importance of teaching our biblical Lutheran heritage. Words that express a grave possibility if teaching is neglected.

Still today, people of the AFLC are concerned about continuing our heritage of “free and living congregations,” and many have expressed a desire in recent years for resources to preserve and teach our Free Lutheran history and biblical foundations for generations to come. In response to these concerns, the Board of Parish Education prayerfully discussed how they might better serve our congregations by providing tools to teach our history and heritage. The idea of an AFLC Heritage Series was conceived and was further encouraged by the Coordinating Committee.

The AFLC Heritage Series is a series of publications that aims to serve our congregations



by providing resources that reflect the unique Lutheran, pietistic, and Scandinavian heritage of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The writings in this series are of theological, historical, biographical, or devotional content. The goal is to include new works, works previously published, and works not previously translated. Intended to be ongoing and open-ended, additional volumes will be added to the series for an indefinite period of time. Two volumes have been published to date.

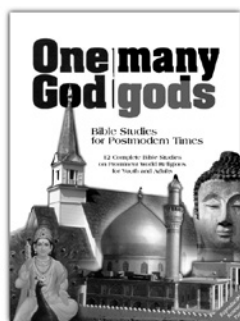
VOLUME I

Published in 1999, “Romans: A Devotional Commentary” leads readers through the book of Romans verse by verse in a devotional style. This out-of-print book was selected for the first volume because of its author and content. The emphasis of the book of Romans is the foundation of the Lutheran church: justification by grace through faith in Christ. The writings of Carl O. Rosenius in the mid-1800s were a significant influence in Scandinavian Lutheran piety. Rosenius was especially known for his monthly periodical called “The Pietist” and for his exceptional ability to divide law and gospel.

VOLUME II

Introduced in October 2002, “Free and Living Congregations: The Dream That Would Not Die” celebrates the 40th anniversary of the AFLC and is ded-

Such conditions represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the church. This study for youths and adults compares 12 of the world’s most prominent religions to Christianity and emphasizes that the fullness of God’s love is seen only in the Christian faith. Includes reproducible student worksheets. **\$13.50**

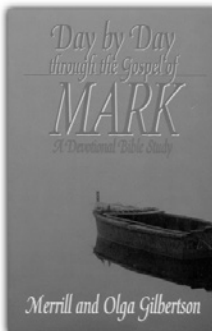


include Scripture readings, prayer suggestions, Bible verses to memorize, stimulating questions, and life application. Helpful study notes included for each session make the book ideal for both classroom and personal study. **\$8**

Secret in the Woods

Visual Story

An action-packed story of three children who receive new life by turning to the Good Shepherd. When one boy dies, the others learn timely truths



about death. Contains 32 large flashcard-type illustrations in book form and accompanying text with divisions for five or eight chapters as well as extra Bible activities and projects. **\$10**

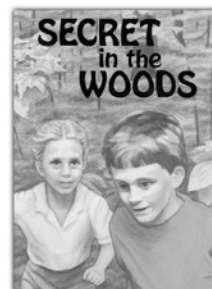
Two other new visual stories available:

Ladi and White-White: Two Illustrated Stories of Africa \$10

Rainbow Garden: Elaine’s Search for Joy \$12.50

Note: listed prices do not include shipping and handling.

Resources available from AFLC Parish Education, 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55441. Phone: 763-545-5631 Email: parished@aflc.org



Day by Day through the Gospel of Mark

These 100 devotional lessons will inspire and challenge readers of the Gospel of Mark to learn more about who Jesus is and what His life and teachings mean for us today. Lessons

WMF God's absolute truth

www.aflcwomen.org

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (I Peter 2:2-3).

Anchoring our kids in what is unchanging and absolute prepares them to respond properly to their ever-changing culture. Schooling, whether it is home, public, or private, must always rest on the absolute truth of God's Word.

The warnings and alarms in the 1986 Chernobyl incident — recorded in the book “Fight on Your Knees,” edited by Mell Winger — that were not properly heeded remind the Christian of the disasters we will face if we do not heed warnings from God.

“Two electrical engineers in the control room that night ... were ‘playing around’ with the machine. They were performing what the Soviets later described as an unauthorized experiment. They were trying to see how long a turbine would ‘free wheel’ when they took the power off it ... In order to get the reactor down to that

power where they could perform the test, ... they had to override manually six separate computer-driven alarm systems. One by one the computer would ... say, ‘Stop! Dangerous! Go no further!’ ... Rather than shutting off the experiment, they shut off the alarms and kept going. You know the results: nuclear fallout that was recorded all around the world, from the largest industrial accident ever to occur.”

Studying and feeding on the Word of God is the only means of spiritual growth. As He proves Himself faithful over and over again in our lives, we trust Him more and more. We learn to trust the Word in such a way that we live by its truth, we obey God, we rely on Him in our daily living. We learn to acknowledge Him in what we think, say and do. We accept Him as He has made Himself known to us through His Word. Through that very Word and our daily experiences, God causes us to grow in our trust, in our peace, in our joy, and in our love.

— *Lynn Wellumson*
Emmanuel Free Lutheran
Williston, N.D.

Time to order 2004 WMF Bible study “Intimacy with God”

Written by Debbie Giles

Does this sound like something just beyond our reach? To be honest, it does. What makes this intimacy possible is that it is God who longs for us to experience intimate communion with Him, and who draws us toward Himself. Debbie invites you to come along with her on a quest to know the heart of God and become His companion. God's delightful promise to Abraham rings through time and speaks to each one of us who sets her heart to know God: “I am your exceedingly great reward!”

Lesson titles include: The Longing of God's Heart; The Most Common Hindrance to Seeking God: NO TIME; An Encouraging, Brief Look at “The Presence of God”; Distinguishing Between Soul and Spirit; A Cautionary Tale — Listening to the Soul; From Surviving to Soaring — Listening to the Spirit; Preparing My Heart, Part 1; Preparing My Heart, Part 2; Entering into His Presence; Lessons on Intimacy from the Song of Solomon.

Debbie and her husband, Dan, are AFLC missionaries to Mexico, where they are serving as church planters. Their vision is to raise up solid, lasting, Free Lutheran congregations in the Spanish-speaking world.

Ordering copies of Bible study

Cost: \$6 each for up to four copies. \$5 each for five or more copies.

Church name: _____

City/state: _____

Number of copies: _____

Send to this address:

Name: _____

Make checks payable to WMF of AFLC.
Send orders to Cheryl Aakre, 36299
440th Ave. NW, Stephen, MN 56757
BEFORE OCTOBER 10.

Vision 2004



Contractors are projecting completion of Heritage Hall, the new AFLC schools student center, this fall. Praise God for all the provisions and work that have been accomplished so far!

Please continue to be in prayer for the building project and for gifts to cover the remaining dollars needed to pay off the \$1.4 million loan. Pray also for members of the Schools Board of Trustees, Schools Corporation, Building Committee and Capital Campaign Committee. Pray also for the students and staff who will use this new facility, and that the building will bring honor and glory to God and help equip laborers to go out into the world to share the love of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your financial gifts and prayer support for Vision 2004. Many individuals are giving generously of their time and talents for this building project.



Clockwise from top right: Bricklayers begin work on the second level of Heritage Hall. Steel girders for the roof were put in place by the second week of August. Building supplies lined the road south of the boy's dorm. Karen Floan, Vision 2004, records progress on the second level of the building project.

Singing their thanks

They came from California, Washington, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. They came to see old friends, meet new ones, and to sing praises to God. But most of all, they came to honor Don Rodvold, their beloved choir director. Rodvold, AFLBS choir director from 1968 to 1985, endeared himself to many through his excellence in choral music, sense of humor and friendship. He was diagnosed with cancer two and one-half years ago, and although he is in good spirits, his health is failing and his time is short.



Former choir director Don Rodvold, pictured with his wife, Mim, was honored during a special AFLBS reunion concert.

Eight years ago, when I was diagnosed with cancer, Rodvold was a source of inspiration as he cheered me on. Now it was my turn to do some cheering. And what better way than through the discipline Rodvold taught his students — excellent choral music. With the help of friends at AFLBS, letters

of invitation were sent out and plans were under way for a concert to honor and thank Rodvold for his faithful service to AFLBS.

What a thrill when 84 singers showed up at the AFLBS chapel on July 12 to spend four hours in rehearsal preparing for a Sunday concert. My husband, Lyle Forde (AFLBS class of 1971), a 27-year veteran high school choral director from Arlington, Wash., led the choir as they raised the chapel rafters in 10 selections, including spirituals, hymn arrangements and traditional choral repertoire taught over the years by Rodvold. Rodvold and his wife, Mim, treated the entire gang to a pizza party during a break where old friendships were rekindled and new ones formed. After a one-hour run-through on July 13, the choir, quartet, trio and soloists were ready to go.

The chapel was filled with friends and family of the Rodvolds, with special guests Bud and Dick, Rodvold's two brothers from Montana and California, respectively. Also included in the audience were

many AFLBS faculty and alumni who came to honor Rodvold.

Along with the presentation of musical selections, former students Pastor Jim Johnson, Paul Persson and Marian Christopherson gave testimonials about their Bible school choir experience under the tutelage of Rodvold.

"Mr. Rodvold, our friend, Don, you're one of the major reasons we sing from the heart, to the heart, with the heart, to stir people toward the heart of God," said Johnson.

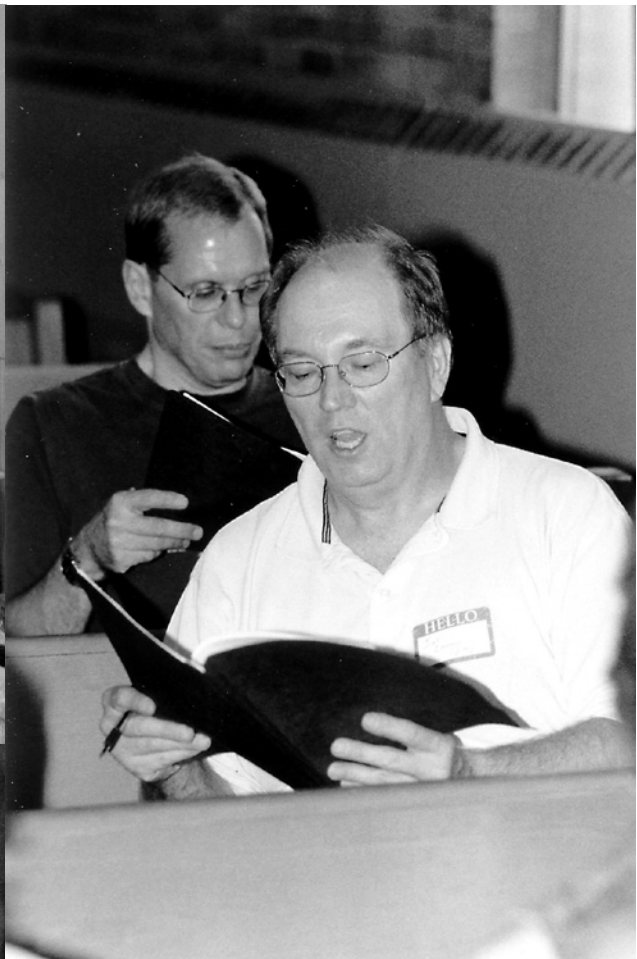
Persson reminded the choir and audience that former AFLC President John Strand had said, "We need men like Don Rodvold in our Association!"

And Marian Christopherson, AFLBS Choral Club director from 1989 to 1997, shared that she learned as much theology through the songs taught by Rodvold as through other Bible classes. "I observed how deeply the texts and music were a part of Don. It was evident that much time had been spent meditating on the texts, and that these truths were deeply impressed on his heart. This enabled Don to lead us in accurately interpreting the music and conveying the message of God's Word. ... [In conducting class] he warned against getting in the way of the message, being a distraction to the listener, and was very conscious of the possibility of hindering the message by falling into a performance mode." Don taught that it wasn't about him or about us, said Christopherson, "it was about the biblical message." She said that message was about childlike faith, our desperate need of Christ, our sin and Jesus' suffering and death, the urgency of proclaiming the gospel, and exuberant Christian joy.

The choir members could all agree that they were there to thank Rodvold for teaching them music that is faithful to God's Word, for the early standards of music excellence that he established at AFLBS, and for demanding excellence and not allowing students to settle for mediocrity.

The concert ended on a jubilant and emotional note when Don came forward to direct Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." What a thrill for these 84 former students, and other alumni who joined the choir from the audience, to once again have the privilege of singing under the expert direction of Rodvold. The overwhelmed director who received a standing ovation said, "This has been the most incredible day of my life!"

— *Lois (Presteng) Forde*
Class of 1970



Clockwise from top left:
 Eighty-seven AFLBS graduates returned to campus for a special concert to honor their former choir director.
 Jim Lumppio, Eden Prairie, Minn., sang under Rodvold in the early 1970s, graduating from AFLBS in 1972.
 Current AFLBS Choir director Jerry Nelson stands with Rodvold and reunion choir director Lyle Forde.
 Steve Berg, Grand Forks, N.D., reunited with other classmates from the class of 1969.
 Jean (Presteng) Olson and sister Lois (Presteng) Forde were reunited for the special concert.

Pastor Carlton Voelker, Eagan, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Redeemer, Canton, S.D., and Skrefsrud, Beresford, S.D. A 2002 graduate of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary, he was ordained Aug. 10 at Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church, Lakeville, Minn.

Pastor Roger David, Armington, Ill., has resigned from Good Shepherd, Lincoln, Ill., and plans to continue to serve the congregation until a new pastor is called.

Pastor Stephen Odegaard, Culbertson, Mont., has accepted a call to serve Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Wash., and will begin his ministry there in September. Odegaard replaces **Pastor Les Galland**, who has taken a part-time position at Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn. Galland also plans to work part-time as a substitute teacher. Also called to a part-time ministry at Faith Lutheran is **Pastor Walter Johnson**.

Pastor Ken Thoreson, serving Alma Free Lutheran and Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Argyle, Minn., will resign in early October. The Thoresons will move to Sebring, Fla., where he hopes to work part-time in ministry.

Pastor Timothy Hurley, Columbus, Ga., has been removed from the clergy roster of the AFLC at his own request. Dr. Hurley is currently the dean and chief academic officer of Beacon College and Graduate School, and does not plan to return to parish ministry.

Trinity Free Lutheran, Minnewauken, N.D., was rededicated on Aug. 10. The building was moved because of local flooding.

Pastor Howard Franzen died on July 25. A memorial service was held July 30 at First St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hastings, Neb. Franzen, 85, married Gertude Larson in 1941. He earned his bachelor's degree at



A new sanctuary building was completed this summer for members of Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo. The building also includes a fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms.

Loveland church hosts outreach event

Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo., will host "Sharing the Love of Christ in Loveland" Sept. 5-10. The outreach-training event will include sessions led by AFLC Evangelism Director Pastor Jim Rasmussen, Home Missions Director Pastor Paul Nash, Pastor Ollie Olson and Pastor Al Monson. Laurie Nash will be the special speaker at a women's luncheon. The event will also include nightly street evangelism. For more information, call Pastor Larry Haagenson at (970) 613-9695.

Included in the schedule of events is a dedication service on Sept. 7 for a new sanctuary completed this summer. Construction on the facility began in June 2002, also including a fellowship hall and Sunday school classrooms. Members of the congregation had been meeting in a funeral chapel for the past eight years. Their first service in the new building was Easter Sunday. AFLC Pastor Robert Lee will speak at the dedication service.

Augsburg College, his graduate of theology from Augsburg Seminary in 1947, his master's of divinity from Luther Seminary in 1973, and a doctorate in Christian counseling from Andersonville Seminary in 1990. He was a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force from 1952-78, serving in New York, Texas, Mississippi, Japan, Korea and Iwo Jima. He retired a Lt. Col. in 1981. He served the AFLC congregations of Faith, Fairbury, Neb., and Abiding Word, Deshler, Neb.

Pastor Martin Horn has accepted a

call to serve Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., and Immanuel Lutheran, rural Wanamingo, Minn. Horn left his work at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn., at the end of August.

Members of **Crown of Life Lutheran**, Tomball, Texas, are seeking continued help with a church building project. If you can contribute financially or physically, contact Pastor Gordon Waterman, 14007 Crescent Drive, Tomball, TX 77375. Phone: 281-351-8001. E-mail: arlenewa@ev1.net

World Missions Available for God

— *Jesse Long*
Atonement Free Lutheran
Arlington, Wash.

I had a chance to visit the AFLC mission field in Brazil in 2001 and 2002. As a result of these experiences I began some self-study of the Portuguese language. As 2003 approached, I decided to pursue a more extended period of time in Brazil to study the language and become involved in ministry opportunities as they presented themselves. As I began my planning, God was faithful to confirm His will and open many doors, making the way clear for me to go to Brazil. I arrived on Feb. 18, and, Lord willing, will be here until the end of August.

Yesterday I was up again before 6 a.m. at the Bible school in Campo Mourão and riding my bike into town before 7 a.m. My destination: Colegio Santa Cruz, the most reputable private school in the city, where I was scheduled to teach English in five of the six morning class periods. I have been studying here for more than a month free of charge. God is good. After school each morning I am always busy with guitar lessons, Portuguese lessons, or, twice a week, giving private English lessons for university students. I sometimes have a bit of time for personal study or quiet time in the afternoon before getting some supper here on campus and heading to class. I have been taking all of the first-year courses here at SEMEAR (AFLC Bible school and seminary), which run from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. God, again, has been so good to work out the timing of these courses.

The first course I took was Evangelism Explosion (in Portuguese, of course). I have had quite a bit of experience with this program, which made it a bit easier for me. Using this tool, I have been able to share the gospel with various people with whom I come in contact each week. So far, I have had the privilege of leading four people to the Lord, three of whom were English students of mine. The doors that I see God open for me each day have been challenging and faith-building. I am daily reminded that as we are available, God will make us able.

Another example: This past week in a writing class at school we were discussing the issue of cloning. I was



Jesse Long, Arlington, Wash., has spent the last six months studying in Campo Mourão, Brazil. He has also taken on a teaching ministry of his own with English language classes. He is pictured (center back row) with some of his English students. He has used his time in Brazil to minister whenever the opportunity presents itself.

pretty quiet until one student brought up the issue of God, and was immediately confronted by another student who said, "Who can even prove that there is a God?" That was an open door that I needed to take advantage of. With the next opportunity I raised my hand, with the attention of the teacher and my 40 classmates, and proposed that when we see a building or even just a painting on the wall, we know there is a builder or artist. We don't see the artist, but the product is evidence to the artist or builder's existence. How much more obvious, I said, when we look at nature or at the complexity of our bodies, that there is a Creator who designed and loves us?

After opportunities like that, I often wonder how I came up with the words to express myself in this new language, and the only answer, again, is that God is faithful. I believe with all my heart that God can use our simple testimonies to touch people's hearts and change lives. We may not see fruit today or even tomorrow, but our call is to be faithful.

I have always appreciated the quote, "God does not need our ability, only our availability." Right now I am at a unique place in my life, and I have many unique opportunities as I study downtown, make friends, hang

See BRAZIL, page 22

BRAZIL, from page 21

out, work with delinquents, go shopping, mail things at the post office, work out at the gym, study at Bible school, tutor people in English, visit in people's homes, and get involved in the local churches. More than I could have dreamed, God has imbedded me in the culture.

I want you to think about your life. Maybe you are a young person who is studying; maybe you are a working adult; or, maybe you find yourself in between, going through a time of transition. Whatever your position, you are imbedded in your culture. You have contacts and opportunities very likely that no one else has to reach someone with the gospel. Take advantage of the open

doors that God gives you. Maybe you sense that God is calling you to a new mission field. If so, don't hesitate. People are starving to know the truth, starving to know a God who is real and loves them. Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart plans his way but the Lord directs his steps." Availability is all that God asks. Let Him direct your steps and you won't be disappointed.

WMF asks for camera

The WMF is in need of a digital camera. Has anyone up-graded his or her camera recently? If so, please consider the possibility of donating your previously used camera to the WMF, which needs a digital camera with a minimum of two mega pixels. It would be greatly appreciated and be used to enhance WMF publications.

Thrivent gives to AFLTS

As of July 7, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has supplemented a total of \$7,414 in 2003 to the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary through the GivingPlus program. Supplemental funds are given through Thrivent based on member's gifts to AFLTS. In order to ensure matching funds, Thrivent members must give their gifts to qualifying institutions as early as possible.

Chaplains seminar postponed

The annual chaplains seminar set for Sept. 24-26 has been postponed until September 2004. Stuart Nelson, vice president of the International Conference of Police Chaplains, will speak at the seminar. Times and dates have not yet been set.

WMF memorials April-May-June

Cordelia Erickson, Seattle, Wash.
Avis Rohde, Tioga, N.D.
Alvin Fellbaum, Webster, S.D.
Roy Anderson, Webster, S.D.

AFLC memorials — July

Youth Ministries

Frank Bloom

Home Missions

Marie Monson

Jan Fatland

Tillie Blumer

Gerald Mundfrom

Vision 2004

Walter Grothe

George Wetzel

Ardys Knutson

Avis Rohde

Cal Newcomb

Howard Moe

Loren Jorgenson

Clara Nelson

AFLBS

Dennis Stormoe

Avis Rohde

Parish Education

Betty Friedrich

Miriam Infant Home

Ardys Knutson

Evangelism

Ardys Knutson

World Missions

Martha May

AFLTS

Sam Torgrude

... in honor of

Home Missions

Reuben, Evelyn Emberson

Vision 2004

Ted McEloray

AFLBS

Don Rodvold

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (7 month) — January 1 - July 31, 2003

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$305,568.00	\$23,379.57	\$156,788.17	51
Youth Ministries . . .	48,154.00	3,253.37	23,863.69	50
Parish Education . . .	90,907.00	10,343.60	48,474.63	53
Seminary	150,070.00	14,340.32	76,985.50	51
Bible School	263,356.00	21,589.24	132,186.20	50
Home Missions.	305,087.00	29,496.55	142,785.20	47
Church Extension . . .	28,945.00	1,578.52	11,552.21	40
World Missions.	247,082.00	12,817.84	106,118.01	43
Personal Support . . .	301,156.00	28,705.54	210,337.91	70
TOTALS	\$1,740,325.00	\$145,504.55	\$909,091.52	52
TOTALS 2002	\$1,521,284.00	\$134,572.83	\$942,683.72	62
Goal 58%				

The Evangelism Department received \$5,524.53 in July.

The office of director of Development did not receive any funds in July.

Editorial A youthful example

The apostle Paul wrote to his young friend, Timothy, and said, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (I Timothy 4:11, NIV).

In a variety of ways the young people at the recent Free Lutheran Youth Convention set an example. They are ones we adults should not look down on. Instead, they are ones we can learn from.



Craig Johnson
Editor

Many of the youths at the convention set an example with their honest, humble sharing. The afterglows following the evening services were once again a highlight of the week for me. Students got up and shared of challenges they have faced and how God has helped them. A number of them courageously opened up and told the whole crowd what was on their hearts. In those times — and in small groups and one-on-one conversations — many of the students at the convention were refreshingly candid as they confessed sin, admitted their struggles, shared about their fears and asked for prayer.

We adults too often put on masks. We hide behind an image we work hard at creating. We get fearful of letting people in to see who we really are. We play a role instead of being ourselves. Our conversations become not candid but canned. We tell not what is going on in our lives, but what we think is necessary for people to be impressed.

We encounter this at times in the work of this magazine. We look for people who will let readers know their struggles and how God has given them victory, but often we find a reluctance to do so. Instead we at times get fine declarations of truth, but they are devoid of any personal sharing.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus sets an incredible example of being honest and candid. The Bible calls on us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other” (James 5:16). May our relationships model the example of Paul who said, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (I Thessalonians 2:8).

I also learned from the young people at the convention about worship. Over the years the style of worship at the FLY conventions has been a controversial topic. It is a more contemporary style than some in our AFLC are comfortable with.

Style of worship is an issue that should be considered, but too often it becomes the major and only issue we contemplate when it comes to worship. In one of the workshops at the convention on worship, the need to pursue God more than a certain style of worship was discussed. As we sincerely pursue God He will lead us into the style by which we can most honor Him. We need to take care that we do not get so concerned with how we (and others) are worshipping that we forget Who it is we worship.

Only God knows what was going on in the heart of each worshipper at the convention. Many had a wonderful passion and Christ-centeredness to their worship. Our worship can easily become lifeless and a simple going-through-the-motions, no matter what the style may be. Our focus can become more on what other worshippers are doing right or wrong in our opinion instead of being focused on Christ.

The Lord can enable us to have worship that is full of life and passion and joy. That comes about when we dwell more on what God wants to give than on what we think we ought to receive.

It comes as we spend more time being impressed with what Christ has done and not trying to impress Him with what we have done. It comes as we follow the example of David who prayed, “I praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High” (Psalm 9:1-2).

Jesus said, “... true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (John 4:23). We rejoice that the Lord actually seeks after us to worship Him. Because of Jesus, His death on the cross and His resurrection, sinners like us can be forgiven and then permitted to worship the living God.

True worshippers worship with their hearts and their heads. True worship stirs our emotions and engages our intellects. May the Father find the kind of worshippers He seeks after when He looks at us.

**The Lord can
enable us to have
worship full of life
and passion
and joy.**

Something to Share **New life**

As we wait for our daughter, Renee, to have her first baby, I am reminded of when she was born.

I was sitting in the hospital waiting room reading my Bible



Larry Behne
*Christian Free
Lutheran
Wheatland,
Iowa*

when a man across from me asked me if I believed the Bible was true. It seems like we are faced today with the same question — do we believe it is true? I told him yes, I believed it was true from cover to cover. I shared with him how Jesus had changed my life; how a man had showed me in the

Word of God that unless I repented of my sins I would not inherit eternal life. I shared with him how God had healed me of alcohol and how he completely changed my life.

He told me he had a friend down the hall who had smoked all of his life and was dying of cancer. He asked me if I would talk with him. When we arrived in the room I saw that the man's condition was not very good. I told him how the Lord had changed my life. I had the opportunity to ask him if something would happen to his life, did he know if he would go to heaven? He said he wasn't sure. I showed him Romans 10:9, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." I told him that was what I had done, and that I knew I had eternal life. I John 5:13 says you shall know if you have eternal life. I asked him if he would like to pray and ask Jesus to forgive him of his sins and ask Jesus into his life, and he said yes, he would like to do that. We prayed the sinner's prayer.

I went back out to the waiting room. The man I was talking to there asked me if he could pray that

prayer; he said he would like to go to heaven, also. How the Holy Spirit works in drawing people to Christ through His Word!

A day later when I visited this man in the hospital he asked me if I would get him some cigarettes. I said no, but I would pray for him that God would take that desire away from him. After we prayed he didn't ask me again about cigarettes.

He passed away a few days later. When I attended his funeral, I could think of nothing but praise to our God who opened the door through His Word for this man, because of what He has done through Jesus Christ, and this man now had eternal life. I understand more each day why the Word of God is under attack because of the truth and power within it and its power to change lives. We must pray that we will continue to take a stand on the Word of God every day.

P.S. It's a girl! Praise God!