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LUTHERAN

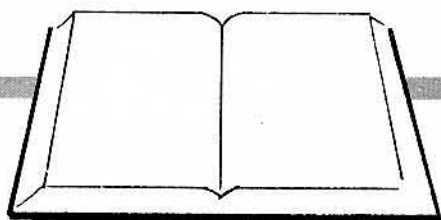
A M B A S S A D O R



THANKSGIVING: FIVE GRAINS OF CORN

When the American Pilgrims sat down to their first Thanksgiving Feast they found five kernels of parched corn on each plate. This served as a reminder of the hardships they had endured during the previous year when rations had been reduced to five kernels of corn for each person.

—KNS Photo



According to the Word

Let Us Give Thanks

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:1, 2).

Thanksgiving season is here and with it comes the traditional things of the past. There is the turkey, an "overflowing" table, and friends. They all have their place. But in the midst of it all, we are so apt to *forget* HIS benefits. We find it hard to really evaluate what we have until we have lost it—when it is too late. I turned the faucet of our kitchen sink this morning and found it dry. My, how important the water seems now that it will be shut off for a few hours. We took it for granted until then.

Paul "suffered the loss of all things," but he could add, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (Phil. 4: 11). This is a tremendous lesson we all need to master these days when there are so many complaints and so few *real* voices of thanksgiving. David saw "the prosperity of the wicked" and was envious, but he didn't see their heartache until he went into the sanctuary of God (Ps. 73:17).

A friend of ours was back home again after doing maid work for some time in the city of New York. "I'm glad it's over," she said. She

had enjoyed the work; her salary was good—but *fear* was wearing her out. Great prosperity and fear often go hand in hand. A successful movie star is quoted as saying, "I hear noise, even with the guards."

Shall we take a few moments to count some of our blessings today? We can't name them all, but you may add to the list.

David puts *forgiveness* at the top of the list. It belongs there, for life in Him begins with forgiveness. I am beginning to realize more and more that I will need it all the way home.

I am thankful for Christian homes along the way and the fact that I had the privilege of growing up in one of them—homes that somehow set the pattern for Christian experience and living; homes where self-forgetting love prevails and hearts find time for those relaxing, quiet moments with God and one another. Such homes stand as a bulwark against the inroads of atheism and crime.

I am thankful for our nation, "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Here men have lived and fought and died for the freedom which we enjoy—and too often take for granted. The banners of morality, integrity and spiritual freedom are still floating in the breeze in spite of the onslaught of those who are enemies of true

greatness. May we not, however, delude ourselves into a sense of self-complacency and pride. The enemies of freedom are constantly at work under the guise of peace and equality and are making tragic progress both in the field of religion and politics. Let us awake before it is too late.

I am also so very thankful for our fellowship of Free Lutheran Congregations. Spiritual freedom for which our forefathers labored and died is gradually being usurped. The emphasis, in general, is no longer on *spiritual* power but on numerical strength. The "lines" between the false and the true, between life and death, between The Way and other "ways" are indistinct and misleading.

The visible Church, which was intended to be the channel through which God reaches a dying world, has become too often merely an exponent of ritualistic form and a bridgehead for dictatorial "isms," both political and religious. At such a time, the Association has come to us as a gift from God in answer to prayer. May we in thankfulness back it up with our prayer, concern and means. Freedom—either temporal or spiritual—is no longer "for sale" at any price in many lands. May we not surrender our freedom while it is yet time to preserve it for the days ahead.

—Karl G. Berg

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Thanksgiving Message

**Mr. Sidney Swenson
Greenbush, Minn.**

IN everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18).

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things" (Ps. 103:1-5).

This month of November is an anniversary of thirty-eight years since I came back to the Lord Jesus Christ, November 20, 1926. It is also the twenty-first anniversary of going into the ministry of God's work, having received this call on Sunday, November 28, 1943. It was also the month of November when we began work at the Lutheran Home Rescue Mission in Chicago, Ill., November 3, 1948, serving fifteen and a half years up until April 4, 1964.

The fourth Thursday of this month has been declared as Thanksgiving Day by our nation and her president. To a Christian every day is Thanksgiving Day unto the Lord, as the Psalmist testifies in this 103rd Psalm; also, the words of the Apostle Paul as he has recorded in his epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3, verse 17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the father by him."

I was brought up in a Christian home in Chicago, Ill., was baptized in Bethel Lutheran Church at Humbolt and Dickens Avenue and confirmed in Bethlehem Lu-

theran Church at Springfield and Iowa Street. I really meant to keep my vows that I gave at confirmation, but I forgot the admonition of God's Word as recorded in Ecclesiastes 12: 1, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

I joined the wrong company and enjoyed the so-called pleasures of sin for a season. I was at the point of death three different times, each time seeing a vision of my mother in prayer for her son.

The first time I came near death was when I was driving a team of horses. I was sitting on the seat of a high wagon-truck. When making a turn in an alley, the rear wheel hit a large stone and I fell from the seat onto the tongue or pole of the wagon between the horses. I was wrapped in blankets and frightened the horses so that they became runaways. After several blocks I untangled myself and stopped the horses.

My second close call with death was during the prohibition days. I was in the home of a saloon keeper and drank quite a bit of moonshine liquor before he had a chance to test and dilute it. When I came back to his place a couple of days later, he exclaimed, "Swenson, you are like a million dollars coming through my door. I never expected to see you alive again. After you left the other night, I tested the liquor and found it to be 130 proof and I diluted it down to 90 proof. When you drank what you did, I never expected that you could be alive, so I was going to try and reach your parents and help pay for the funeral."

The third close call was in a

saloon at 47th and Princeton in Chicago on a Sunday morning at 4:00 a.m., when two police detectives got into an argument and the bullets were flying alongside of our heads. I was with two street-car conductors, Pat Sullivan and Pat Crowley. Both men are dead and possibly in hell for twenty years now. In each of these three incidents I had a vision of my mother in prayer for her oldest son.

On Thursday, November 18, 1926, my two brothers received a letter from our three cousins to attend a prayer fellowship group in their home on Saturday, November 20, 1926, at 8:00 p.m., and asking them to bring their brother, Sidney, with them. They thought that it would be just about impossible even to ask me, much less expect me to go with them, because this was a night I would spend at the saloon.

This letter was left open-faced on the dining room table, and the Holy Spirit directed my eyes as He also magnified them, so that as I looked at this letter, I saw my name, and as I read it the thought came to me, "If my cousins were good enough to invite me, the least I could do was to go." So I said to my brothers, "I believe I will be going with you on Saturday." They were happily surprised, and later I heard them telling Mother, "Let's pray that nothing will cause Sidney to change his mind," as this was Thursday and the meeting was to be on Saturday.

I took four days leave from my work as conductor on the street cars, and when Saturday came we went to our cousin's home, some 16 miles away, which required taking two street cars. We were met by their pastor at the door, Rev.

Torgesen, who asked me, "Would you like to become a Christian like your parents and your two brothers?" I thought I spoke from my heart when I said, "I am satisfied the way I am, and until I see it any differently, I'm going to stay that way." The pastor didn't say any more, but I am sure he kept praying for my soul's salvation.

About 10:30 p.m., my two brothers put on their overcoats and were ready to leave, and I heard them talking to the pastor. God opened my ears this night also. He asked them if they had a good time and they said, "Yes, but we missed one thing." He asked, "What was that?" And they said, "A time of fellowship on our knees." The pastor replied, "You can still have that." But they answered, "Our brother, Sidney, was good enough to come with us and we won't keep him any longer." I spoke up and said, "You can stay here all night if you want to, because I was thinking of going down to the saloon and stay the rest of the night." The brothers took their coats off and got down on their knees and I got down between my brother Raymond and my cousin Gust.

It was the first time I was on my knees since confirmation, some ten years previous. When my brother, Raymond, saw this, he reached over and said, "Sid, if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your soul, don't say no; accept Jesus Christ as your Savior."

The Holy Spirit brought various Scripture passages to my attention. I didn't know where the verses were in the Bible, but I looked them up later. "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3). It now became serious for me—what if I should refuse God's call? I could be taken out of this world suddenly. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Right then and there I had the experience of the Psalmist in the 40th Psalm and at once received the assurance that I was a child

of God. II Corinthians 5:17 also became mine. I began thanking God for salvation and began praying for my cousin Gust, that he might be saved.

I hadn't been in church for about ten years, but the next day was Sunday and I was in church four times. God has kept me these 28 years since November 20, 1926, and I have been serving Him all these years.

I am at present here in Greenbush, Minnesota, serving eight congregations as lay pastor. We covet your continued prayers.

Thanks be to God for all things in Christ Jesus.

UNAFRAID TO SPEAK

"Take it back!" said the emperor to the man standing in front of him.

"I can't take it back, I will not!" the man fearlessly replied. "What I have spoken and written is the truth. God loves sinners and forgives them, not because of their good deeds but because of His great love for all people."

The day was April 18, 1521. The place was Worms, Germany. The man who refused to take back his beliefs was Martin Luther.

Luther didn't fear to speak of God's love though he was in danger of prison and death. The emperor and the church leaders all were ready to condemn him for false teaching. But Luther knew that Jesus would give him courage to stand his ground. He believed and practiced what the Bible says: "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame."

On Reformation Day we think of Martin Luther's great confession. Through this man and others like him God preserved for us the Bible's teaching that we are saved by grace, not by works. Jesus has freed us from the slavery of the law, and we can now "walk at liberty." We also, like Luther, will be ready to speak out for our Savior whenever we have the chance.

N. N.

GOD'S WORD FOR A NEW AGE

THE annual Thanksgiving-to-Christmas Bible reading program of the American Bible Society offers this year the following schedule.

NOVEMBER

26 Thanksgiving....	Psalm	.....1
27	Psalm	.....100:1-5
28	Psalm	.....103
29 1st Adv. Sunday..	Hebrews	.....11:1-39
30	Psalm	.....19:1-14

DECEMBER

1	James	.....1:19-27
2	James	.....2:14-23
3	1 Peter	.....1:13-25
4	Isaiah	.....6:1-10
5	Isaiah	.....11:1-9
6 2nd Adv. Sunday		
beg. Univ. Bible		
Week	Isaiah	.....40:1-11
7	Isaiah	.....40:12-31
8	Isaiah	.....52:7-15
9	Isaiah	.....53:1-12
10	John	.....1:1-18
11	John	.....15:1-11
12	John	.....15:18-27
13 3rd Adv. Sunday		
Univ. Bible Sunday	1 John	.....1:1-2:6
14	1 John	.....3:1-10
15	1 John	.....3:11-24
16	1 John	.....4:7-21
17	Ephesians	.....3:1-21
18	Ephesians	.....4:1-32
19	1 Corinthians	.....13:1-13
20 4th Adv. Sunday..	Matthew	.....1:18-25

WORLDWIDE READING of the CHRISTMAS STORY

21	Luke	.....1:5-25
22	Luke	.....1:26-38
23	Luke	.....1:39-80
24	Luke	.....2:1-20
25 Christmas	Matthew	.....2:1-12

BIBLE VERSES

"Bless the Lord, O my soul;
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits."
Psalm 103:1, 2

"Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens,
praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels,
praise him, all his host!"
Psalm 148:1, 2



NEWS of the Churches

FROM THIEF RIVER FALLS, MINN.

Nearly \$1000.00 was the free-will offering at the Harvest Festival held in October in the Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minn. The guest speaker was Pastor R. P. Haakonson of Moorhead, Minn., who gave us a powerful message. The Festival was held in connection with a special series of evangelistic meetings which closed Sunday, October 18. The last gathering was Luther League at which Rev. Haakonson was also the speaker. The League voted \$35.00 to be sent to the national Luther League for expenses of the national conference, which is to be held at the Seminary near Medicine Lake, Minneapolis, Minn. All the meetings were well attended, with evangelical messages throughout, special music at each meeting and a wonderful spirit of fellowship not only among our own people but also with other congregations from Thief River Falls and out-of-town districts. We hope that Pastor Haakonson will have the time to be with us again in a longer series of meetings in the near future.

—Corr.

PASTOR HANS TOLLEFSON INSTALLED IN HATTON PARISH

Pastor Hans J. Tollefson was installed on October 4 as pastor of the Hatton, N. Dak., parish, which includes Zoar of Hatton, Ny Stavanger of Buxton, and Valley Free of Portland. He is also assisting at the present time in Grand Forks.

Gary Skramstad, student pastor at Grand Forks, has also been assisting with some of the services in the parish. Pastor Fritjof Monseth of Valley City officiated at the installation.

Pastor Tollefson and family arrived the last of June from Astoria, Ore., where he had served the Bethany Church for the past 8½ years. Pastor Ray Persson is now serving that congregation for the Association.

Zoar of Hatton is a congregation that voted not to go along with the merged church. Valley Free of Portland is composed of members of the former Aurdal Lutheran Free Church who withdrew when Aurdal went into the ALC. Ny Stavanger of Buxton was an independent church consisting of persons who had not participated in a local merger of two evangelical Lutheran congregations some years ago. They also now have a beautiful church of their own.

Last June the Parish purchased a house in Hatton to serve as a parsonage where the pastor and family are now residing. Open house was held on November 15 for the members and friends of the three congregations.

VALLEY FREE LUTHERAN CHURCH DEDICATED SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

Sunday, October 4, was a big day for the small group of faithful members of the Valley Free Lutheran church of Portland, N. Dak., for on that day they saw their hopes realized in the dedication of their new church. Pastor Fritjof

Monseth, vice president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, officiated at the consecration service.

Valley Free Congregation was organized August 4, 1962, with ten family units signing up as charter members. These were all former members of the Aurdal Lutheran Free Church who had withdrawn their membership because they felt they could not go into the merger.

At a legally called business meeting, these members decided to purchase the former Presbyterian Church at Clifford which was then up for sale. The structure was moved to its present location in Portland in February of 1963. A basement was built and the church placed on the foundation and remodeled. The necessary equipment was purchased and furnished by the members. The kitchen is modern and fully equipped.

This shows what a consecrated group of loyal members can do when working together. The church also has a fine group of Christian young people, youth who made definite decisions for the Lord. They attend regularly the mid-week meetings, as well as a Bible study meeting of their own.

Valley Free is a member church of the Hatton Parish. Pastor Hans Tollefson began serving this parish the first of July. Previous to this Pastor Raynard Huglen served the church for a short time, followed by two students from Grand Forks, Gary Skramstad and Robert Lee.

NY STAVANGER HAS MISSION SUNDAY

Sunday, October 15, was set aside by Ny Stavanger as Mission Sunday. Mr. Alvin Grothe who soon plans to leave for the Mission Field in Brazil was the guest speaker at the morning and afternoon sessions. Two very inspiring and Spirit-filled messages were brought us by Mr. Grothe. A combined choir composed of members from Valley Free of Portland and Ny Stavanger of Buxton sang at

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OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

by PASTOR JOHN STRAND

WE GIVE THANKS!

Another Thanksgiving season is here. We need these reminders lest we neglect the Christian virtue gratitude. It is easy to forget our blessings, to forget to give thanks. It is especially easy for people who have received much. Those who have little are usually more grateful. This certainly shows how human our nature is. It is easier to see what we have not, than to remember all that we have, especially for those who have much. Even though we may realize our blessings, thanks is often a hard word to say and gratitude a heart attitude not cultivated.

Paul wrote in Colossians 1:3, "We give thanks to God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." Paul was thankful. He was constantly expressing gratitude and urging others to be grateful. Even though he knew the pain of much illness, even though he suffered tremendously, being continually persecuted for his convictions, he was a thankful man. He had a fellowship with Christ that no one could take from him. He was aware how the kingdom of God was growing. He realized that God the Father was the giver of all these things. To Him he gave

thanks.

Our Association ought to give God thanks. This is one of the purposes of our "Praise Program." God has been good to us.

There is a great need for evangelism today. We rejoice that the Gospel is still powerful. We rejoice in awakenings in several places. We rejoice that Christians are being kept, in these days of apostasy. We thank God for the Word and the sacraments of the Church.

We thank God for our congregations, for the work being done in every place. We thank God for our growing and deepening fellowship. We thank God for the congregations and pastors who have joined us, and for the many on the way. We thank God that these congregations have loyally supported the work.

We thank God for our new mission field. How good to have missions in South America and Mexico.

We thank God for our seminary with its fine teachers and student body. We thank God for the prospects of another large class entering next year. We thank God for the growing influence of this work.

We thank God for our Church paper, with its expanding ministry.

We thank God for our W.M.F.,

our Luther League Federation, and our Bible camps.

We thank God for our headquarters and seminary property, a source of pride, and adequate ground for any foreseeable expansion.

For this, and much more, our Association gives thanks to God.

As Paul thanked God the Father, he also prayed for the people. He recognized that while God was the ultimate source, He used people. Therefore, Paul prayed always for the people. God is looking for committed people so that He can give greater reasons for gratitude. There is much more that God can do.

At this Thanksgiving season, let us pray for our Church. As much as God has given, let us pray that we, by our obedience, may make it possible for God to do more.

Then too, as we are committed, God's will is proved. God has revealed by His blessings on the Association that the Association is of His will. It would be hard to dispute this. As God is permitted by our commitment to do more and more, His will will become ever more proved, not only to us, but to others (Romans 12:1-2).

Let us thank God

Let us pray for our people

Let us commit ourselves to the Lord.



Seminary in Plymouth Village, Minneapolis, Minn. In its first year of operation, the seminary has just one class, the junior class. Other classes will be formed in succeeding years to complete the three-year cycle of study.

From left to right, first row: James Jacobson, Edwin Kjos, Raymond Peterson. Second row: Francis Monseth, Reuben Evenson, Richard Gunderson, Howard Kjos. Third row: David Malstre, Robert Rieth. Standing: Rev. John Strand, Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, Rev. Clair Jennings. Absent: student Arlie Kuhl.

**IN GRATITUDE TO GOD
THE ASSOCIATION
OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS
LAUNCHES OUT IN A SPECIAL**

“PRAISE PROGRAM”

**THIS
THANKSGIVING SEASON, 1964**

If you do not belong to an Association congregation, make your check payable to the AFLC, and send it to Mr. Robert Bursheim, Treas., 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55427.



THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT: A CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower. Now free to worship as their consciences dictated, a group of Pilgrims signed the famed Mayflower Compact, a short set of laws which established certain concepts of religious freedom. The document later became a basis for democratic government in the colonies. This painting, by Robert W. Weir, hangs in the Capitol at Washington, D.C. —RNS Photo

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the afternoon session. Dinner was served at noon to members and friends. A fine mission offering was received, amounting to \$557.

—Corr.

SPICER PARISH GREEN LAKE SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSION RALLY

The Sunday school of the Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer, Minn., sponsored four Sundays of mission rallies, September 13 through October 4. Our theme verse was John 10:16 and our theme song "Send the Light." We arranged various contests to in-

crease interest and attendance.

On September 13 we were blessed to have with us Claire Hobart, blind missionary and musician of Laredo, Texas. The following Sundays letters were read from missionaries who receive offerings through our Sunday school. Two Sundays of each month offerings are taken to help support various missions.

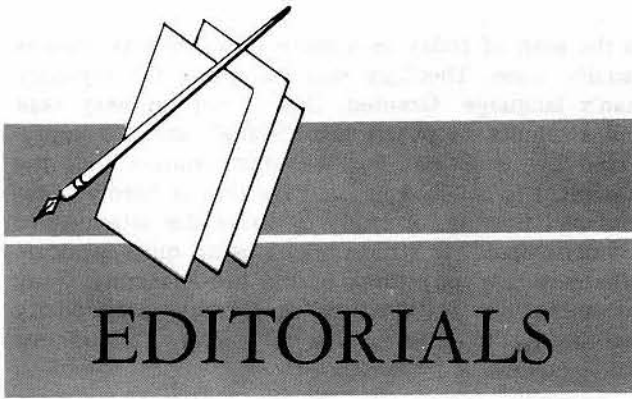
The last Sunday of the rally was also promotion Sunday. An interesting letter from Pastor John Abel and his family was read. What a joy to know that our first missionary family from the Association had reached Brazil. We were also blessed to have Mr. and

Mrs. Ove Aaker of Valley City, N. Dak., share their testimonies with us. That evening the Aakers showed slides of their visit to the Holy Land.

The four Sundays created much interest for both young and old. A goal of \$100 was to be reached, and used for the foreign missions of our Association. Again the Lord blessed us far abundantly above all we could ask or think. The offerings for the four Sundays amounted to nearly \$300.

"Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. 106:1).

—Henry Kallevig, Sup't



THANKSGIVING, 1964

Thanksgiving is seeing a beautiful, fat squirrel escape from a chasing dog. Such an incident happened on our lawn just this moment. We don't mean to be sacrilegious. Life is made up of little things. We are to thank the Lord for the insignificant events that are good as well as the great events that save and sustain human life.

Last year we observed Thanksgiving in the numbed days of national disaster. Who will ever forget those hours as the depravity of man overshadowed the land?

In 1964, God-willing, we shall have happier circumstances in which to observe our day of gratitude. But no matter how tranquil the times may seem, we ought to remember that all is not right with our country or the world.

There is uneasy peace in the world and there is also war, even if limited. There are masses of unevangelized. Millions are hungry and in want.

In America there is racial inequality and unrest. There are the poor and purposeless, crime and delinquency increase, materialism is a god before which many bow and scrape.

The Christian has two thoughts in mind at Thanksgiving. For one thing, he does stop to thank God for the pleasant places of his own lot—for friends, for peace of soul, strength, church, country and the daily fellowship with his Savior. But he is also aware of the tragedies of the world about him. He desires to share his Christ with the spiritually lost, his own goods with the physically poor, his good-will with all humanity and his purpose with the irresolute.

What the future may bring, God only knows. But "hitherto hath the Lord helped us," and we will lift up our hearts and voices in Thanksgiving. As for the future, the Lord will provide. He has never failed and He will not now.

TOWARD CLARIFICATION

Having the dual role of chairman of the Committee on Publications and Parish Education and editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, I should like to address myself to a complaint which has been called to my attention.

The complaint is that the confirmation materials

of the Association use the Revised Standard Version Bible text. There has been mention made of "newly written" materials.

Let me say, as a member of the Committee, that no confirmation courses have been prepared since the merger, none are in the process of being prepared, there are no specific plans for any courses at this time.

If the complaint is in reference to the materials which have been advertised in the *Ambassador*, and these are the only confirmation materials the Association has recommended (actually only the Catechism and Bible History have been recommended), it should be understood that they do not use the RSV. The Catechism and Bible History antedate the RSV (New Testament, 1946; Old Testament, 1952) by many years. The two workbooks also appeared before the RSV and specifically urge the use of the American Standard Version.

If the complaints are in reference to some material with which the Association has no connection, then the Committee does not wish to be held responsible for them.

Be assured that before any printed materials for parish education are made available to you—and we hope this can be done before so very long—we will discuss the use of Bible texts with the Board of Administration.

My own personal opinion, of course, is that the RSV is a legitimate and good translation of the Bible. No one need be ashamed in using it. Many have found clearer understanding as Scripture has come to them in more up-to-date language. And yet, in comparison with some newer translations and paraphrases its language seems downright old-fashioned.

We must not despise a brother who uses a different translation of the English Bible than we do.

Raynard Huglen

PRIVATE CONFESSION

The Lutheran Church in America Commission on Worship has voted to launch a "study of historical, theological and psychological factors in private confession." Earlier in the year the church convention in Pittsburgh had said that "opportunity for private confession and absolution should be afforded in every parish." Stricken from the statement was an addition which encouraged people to avail themselves of private confession and absolution.

Our first reaction to anything regarding private confession is that it is just another step on the road to Roman Catholicism.

But fairness demands that we concede that there is value to private confession. Our catechisms (even the Association one) have long contained questions pertaining to confession. The question is asked in ours, "What is Confession?" The answer: "Confession consists of two parts: the one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God Himself, in no wise

doubting, but firmly believing, that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven." In another answer, it is stated, "To the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts."

Our aversion to confession of this sort is no doubt twofold. First, we fear that it becomes only a mechanical thing, only a form and ceremony. Second, the idea that only God can forgive sin militates against making confession to another person.

In regard to the first, we would *never, never* approve of any mandatory system of private confession before communion or a minimum requirement for a year. This would lead to the abuses we so much want to avoid.

On the other hand, in reference to the second aversion, it is correct that only God can forgive sin, but His pastors, or some other Christian, can be His earpiece to hear confession and in His name declare forgiveness. Private confession and absolution, rightly handled, are surely Biblical. "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' (John 20:22, 23). "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (Jas. 5:16a). Private confession and absolution, wrongly handled, can become a satanic tool.

Should a Christian make use of private confession to the exclusion of personal confession alone with the Lord, an incredible deformity in understanding would be indicated. It is hard to see how such life could continue. Contrariwise, a Christian practising daily confession alone with God may find a great blessing and release in sometimes making confession in the presence of his pastor or a trusted Christian friend.

Our conclusion, then, is that private confession must not be ruled out. It can be encouraged. Already every pastor is available to hear such confession. But we must never be a party to any system of enforced, regulated, or required private confession.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

A year ago Lutherans of the world were lamenting the failure of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, meeting in Helsinki, Finland, to come up with a message on justification from all the member churches. Over a year later the message has been released through the Commission on Theology which re-edited it, but "did not alter its character."

Word is that it should not be taken as a "systematic presentation of the common opinion of the LWF on justification." In other words, we shouldn't take it as a systematic presentation, but we can see it as representing considerable opinion in the LWF, otherwise why release it at all?

We shall limit our comments on the Statement to two areas. First, we understand that this was to be an attempt to bring the message of justification

to the man of today in a more effective way than is usually done. Theology was to speak the ordinary man's language. Granted, this is not an easy task and attempts to put it into "slang" are not appreciated by us either. But we must confess that the statement is couched in language that is hardly beautiful and flowing, or likely to strike the attention of "modern man." It strikes us as being quite wooden. Whatever one may think of the pre-Assembly study document "On Justification," it did have a simplicity and beauty missing in this statement. This is one strike against it.

Secondly, for us who see the baptismal covenant as one which is all too often broken by man, the Statement concentrates far too much on justification through baptism. That is part of it, to be sure, but what of those who wander into the far country and turn their backs on God? Why not describe the experience of such a one? A sentence such as "The lordship of Christ is actualized on earth when men believe in Jesus Christ and obey his word," does indicate something, but the aspect of conversion is passed by all too lightly.

We suppose that what bothers us is the possible presence here of an all too common belief that the baptized are in fellowship with God almost no matter what they have done. If the relationship is blurred, a man must try to "find himself." As we understand it, such a man may need to repent and be converted to get back into that fellowship at all. It is that emphasis which we wish were more evident today and about which this Statement would have more to say.

TWO LEADERS IN THE KREMLIN

Two leaders of equal strength in Russia? That we have to see. This can no more happen than that the United States can have two presidents. Watch for one or the other to emerge as undisputed leader. The "old Adam" is still present in Communists, too.

The Russians tried something like this before and it didn't work. The old saying is true, "The only thing we learn [from history] is that we never learn."

FORWARD PROGRESS AFFIRMED

Opinions as to what the recent United States election results really mean will differ from person to person. It seems evident, though, that the election indicates the desire of the American people that steady progress continue in bettering the opportunities of the Negroes and granting them "full citizenship."

There will be struggles yet, and problems. The Negro people must act responsibly and show great willingness to make their own way.

But all Christians should rejoice that the mood of the nation is that we go forward to remove this blight which has too long given the lie to the American boast of freedom for all.

A Child's First Visit to God's House

Psalm 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go unto the house of the Lord.'"

The lives of older Christians have always been a real blessing and challenge to me and I love to talk to them of their walk with God. My husband's aunt (Mrs. Gunhild Amundson) is one of these precious people.

Our conversation that Sunday afternoon was about the faithfulness of God. Then our 86-year-old aunt told me this story which I had heard so often before.

"I can remember so well, as if it were today, how I longed to go to church but was unable to because young children weren't permitted in church as they might disturb the preacher. Someone always stayed home to care for these children." So it was with great anticipation that Auntie waited to be old enough to go to the house of God.

"I tell you, the time seemed as if it would never come, but all this time I was learning about God and His house from my father." Her father, Nels Jodock, was a tailor in that village in Norway and made all the clothes his family needed and also sewed for others nearby. This godly man kept his Bible beside him and often referred to it as he and his daughter worked together. So this child's mind was full of pictures of what God's house would be like. "I tell you that I begged many times to go to church, always to hear 'wait until you are older.'

"But finally the day came and I couldn't sleep that Sunday morning, but was up before anyone, getting myself ready to go to God's house!" She had a great desire to see God's house and to know more about the inside of it. Somehow in her childish heart she wondered if she would see the boy Jesus as told in Luke 2:40-52, or would it be God the Father? What was He

like?

"I tell you, I remember so well that wonderful day that I got to go to church for the very first time. I soon was to start school and Father had made me a beautiful dress." Here in the story Auntie's face lit up with real joy at the memory of that dress. "It was a winter dress, green and black stripes with beautiful trimmings on the neck and the cuffs. I tell you, I was so proud that day.

"Even the rooster didn't wake me up that morning. I just couldn't sleep. I must see God's house. Finally my family got up and we had breakfast. At long last I was—oh, wonderful day—on my way to church. It was about two miles down a big, wide road. No, I wasn't afraid to go alone because I was used to roaming those hills caring for the cattle, and now I was going to the house of God. It wasn't until later that I learned that my godly father followed me at a safe distance all the way to church. But he need not have feared at being caught as I was in too much a hurry to get to the house of God. I never even looked back once.

"Finally, my steps slowed as I reached God's house. I caught my breath at the wonder of it all! Then very, very softly and ever so reverently I pushed the church door open, just a little, and peeped in, only to find it empty. But, oh, the grandeur of it all! Then very, very softly and almost hesitatingly, scarcely breathing, I climbed the stairs to the balcony, feeling unworthy to sit in the main auditorium. Then, too, I knew that I could see much more from there. Reverently and very, very softly I crept down to the very front of the balcony and searched for the boy Jesus or the man Jesus, but the church was so empty.

"Then as I sat down I felt a wonderful presence like I had never known before. In later years

I realized this to be God's presence. Then as I sat there looking all around at the beautiful windows and all the beautiful interior of the church, I remembered the things I had learned about God, and this was His house. Two ladies came in and sat behind me and whispered, 'Who is that child? Maybe she is the daughter of the "klokker" (or sexton).' I wanted to laugh because it made me feel so good." It seems that Auntie felt they thought this because of her new dress. "I felt so big and so important; me being called the daughter of the 'klokker.'" At this point in her story she had a real good laugh. "But how glad I was to just be able to come to the house of God."

And today at her age she still feels unworthy to sit in God's house. And although her steps are now uncertain and she can't hear the whispering behind her in church, God's wonderful presence is just as real as when a child in Norway.

"But I tell you, one of these glorious days I'm really going to the house of this God I so loved as a child and still love as an old lady."

Some day soon now, she will hear God's voice saying, "Come on up higher, my child. No one is too young or too old to live in my heavenly house forever and ever."

—Mrs. Arnold Jodock
Kempton, N. Dak.

(I had the privilege of having Mrs. Amundson in my audience in Zoar Lutheran Church, Hatton, N. Dak., a number of times last year when I preached there. Many years ago she was a member of my father's parish at Wildrose, N. Dak. May a measure of the awe and wonder with which she went to God's house the first time grip us as we go to our churches so freely and easily.—Ed.)



TRAIN UP A CHILD

As I try to share with you something of what I feel as a Christian mother, I feel very humble.

There are many ways in which I would long to do better and be a wiser mother. However, my heart is also filled with thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for His goodness. His presence has brightened all the way. And our assurance for the future is the assurance that He will go with us.

God's Word is filled with precious promises and admonitions for mothers. We need only receive and appropriate them for ourselves.

One of these which I have often relied upon is found in James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally." If we ask in faith, He will supply as the needs arise. How much we need this, because we have only one opportunity to rear each child. This has been an impressive thought to me. Many parents have probably wished that a child might be small again that they might do better in guiding it into the way of righteousness, but the child is grown and the opportunity has passed. How we need to redeem the time and do all we can that each child may love Jesus and trust in Him!

On a page of a calendar in our home is the heading, "Prayer Cannot Fail." This reminds us of one of the greatest gifts that God has

given to mothers. Who can fathom all that has been wrought by the prayers of mothers? Yet many neglect this priceless privilege. If we are faithfully committing our children to the Lord in prayer we can have the assurance of II Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Truly it is He who must do the work in the hearts of our children.

Just last Sunday at church we were reminded of our Lord's great love and mercy toward little ones as a tiny baby girl was brought to Him in baptism. Our pastor admonished the parents to teach her in her early youth the way she should go, and according to God's Word, "when she is old she will not depart from it." How wonderfully God has provided for children, and surely we should do our part to fulfill His plan in their young lives. How tragic it is to deprive little children of the chance to learn to trust in Jesus and pray to Him.

Our children have all prayed in their own words since they were old enough to do so. Many, many times we have seen how they have been encouraged, strengthened and cheered through their prayers.

One day when our older son was about four years old, he was going to the post office alone for the

first time. Happily he started off, but almost immediately turned back. I wondered why until he said, "You better pray first." He felt the need of prayer before launching out on this new adventure.

Another incident which is vivid in memory at this season is of our oldest child's first school day. That morning his younger brother was still asleep and the baby was too small to understand, so he and I sat alone on the davenport. We both were keenly aware of the significance of this day. He sat very close to me and I sensed his slight feeling of apprehension. I read from the devotional book we were accustomed to using and we prayed committing all to the Lord. A happy, hopeful little boy then went bravely off to school. What a wonderful peace and security for us both to know that our blessed Lord was taking care of everything.

As we think of young children we are reminded of this wise quotation from Spurgeon: "Ere a child has reached to seven, teach him all the way to heaven. Better still the work will thrive if he learns before he's five."

May we keep ever before us the purpose of all our efforts as mothers—that some day, by His marvelous grace, we and all our children shall be present with the Lord.

As we contemplate such a future we can testify with the song writer—

"Throughout eternity I know
I cannot tell how much I owe."
—Mrs. Ingvald Rokke
Strandquist, Minn.

FALL RALLY OF THE NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT WMF

The fall rally of the Women's Missionary Federation of the North Central Minnesota District of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations met at Landstad Lutheran Church in Shevlin, Minn., on Tuesday, October 13, 1964.

The theme for the rally was "So Send I You."

The morning session opened at

10:30 with Miss Ona Broden, president, presiding. The welcome was extended by Mrs. Helmer Strandlien of the Landstad Ladies Aid. The theme song, "So Send I You," was sung by the audience. Mrs. E. Tonder, Sell Lake Church, led in devotion with the audience reading responsively from Romans 10. A vocal solo was sung by Mrs. Kenneth Johnson of Maple Bay.

The Bible study was given by Pastor I. M. Norum, based on Acts 13 and 14. A ladies' trio from the Wilton parish sang "Children of the Heavenly Father." Mr. Knute Jore brought greeting from the Redby Indian Mission. Mrs. Alvida Salte led in a prayer session with prayer requests being made for the national WMF officers, missionary families, the Board of Administration and the seminary faculty.

Dinner was served by the ladies of Landstad congregation.

The afternoon session opened at 1:30 with the singing of the theme song. Mrs. Nordahl Nelson from Bemidji led devotions, reading from John 14:1-21. The WMF chorus sang two songs, "The Morning Light Is Breaking" and "Lost in the Night." Mrs. Herbert Presteng, national vice-president, gave a report on the projects of the WMF.

Mrs. Truman Rolf and Mrs. Morris Moen, Trinity Lutheran, McIntosh, sang "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus." Mr. Halvor Hegg, district vice-president, gave a report on Mission Sunday held at Fosston on August 2.

In the business session, the district decided to remain as it is now. Mrs. Haldor Hegg from McIntosh was re-elected to serve two years as vice-president. Mrs. Ed Mathison from Shevlin was elected to serve as treasurer for two years. The offering amounted to \$131.00. Of that, \$10.00 was voted to the Redby Mission and \$71.00 to the Association missions.

There were 84 ladies registered from nine parishes. Mrs. Luther Monson, Perley, was appointed cradle roll secretary for the district.

Pastor Norum gave the closing benediction.

God gave us a beautiful day and each one returned home thankful to Him and renewed and strengthened in spirit to be more dedicated to the work of His kingdom.

Mrs. Henry Jacobson, Secretary

CENTRAL MINNESOTA DISTRICT WMF MEETING HELD

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (John 15:9).

This was our motto as we of the Women's Missionary Federation of the Central Minnesota District began our fall rally in the Clitherall Covenant Church, Clitherall, Minn., October 16, 1964.

The morning service began with the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers." Mrs. Ted Tebben, Sebeka, led in Scripture reading and prayer. As the opening for the Bible meditation, Rev. Carl Ostby of Dalton sang "Have You Been in the Garden Alone with Jesus?" Our Bible meditation was divided into four parts: Love to God, by Mrs. Rorvig; Love to Those in the Home, by Mrs. Aasness; Love to Our Neighbor, by Mrs. Thomas; and Love to Our Neighbor Across the Sea, by Mrs. Emma Svare.

Special messages in song were presented by Pastor Ostby, Mrs. Akerman, Mrs. Thompson, Miss Mayves Svare and Mr. and Mrs. Ted Aasness. WMF news was shared.

At noon a potluck dinner was served.

The afternoon session was opened by the singing of a few choruses. Pastor Ostby shared the verse, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b), and gave his personal testimony. After this there was a prayer session.

Mr. and Mrs. Otto Saukerson from South Dakota were introduced. Mr. Saukerson will serve as lay pastor at Dalton because of Pastor Ostby's retirement. Mrs. Saukerson shared I Corinthians 13 with the group and Mr. Saukerson gave his personal testimony. He said, "Thank God for women, the WMF, my wife, mother and grand-

mother for their work and prayer."

Miss Mayves Svare, daughter of Mrs. Emma Svare, Pelican Rapids, Minn., is in earnest thought and prayer about going into mission work. Her testimony was brought forth from Acts 20:24. Please pray for her.

A letter from Mrs. Alvin Grothe was read and her testimony verse was found in Romans 8:28.

Special numbers in song were sung by Pastor Ostby, Mrs. Akerman, and Mrs. Thomas.

Jerry Thorpe and Larry Johnson of Valley City were the guest speakers for the afternoon. They showed slides and told much about their work and experiences in spending the summer months with the Dynnesons at Nogales, Arizona. They told much about living conditions and spiritual circumstances there. They pictured the work and the various obstacles they met. Their talks were very interesting. May the Lord bless them.

In closing, the song "Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated Lord to Thee" was sung and the Lord's Prayer was prayed.

Mrs. Ted Aasness, Secretary

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN OUR WORK FROM THE TREASURER'S OFFICE

The following indications of interest in our work were all accompanied by concrete expressions of interest—financial contributions for the Association.

May the Lord richly bless you as you go forward in His vineyard. I hope I might be able to send a little now and then to help along. I am so thankful that the Lord has promised to bless and use what is given in His name.

Minneota, Minn.

I am enclosing \$50.10 in check to be used to God's glory—some to the two missionaries going out this fall, some to the seminary, and some to the work of the Association. May the work continue to go forward to God's glory and honor. Wadena, Minn.



REMEMBER ADVENT

Some of the warmest memories of childhood are reminiscent of Christmas, for it seems almost every family has developed certain traditions that add love and joy to the celebration of the Savior's birthday. Many customs have endured for generations and are as dear to the children now as they were to great, great grandfather's offspring.

The family that belongs to the Lord shares special blessings in their celebration of this festive day, for their emphasis is on the spiritual aspect of the holiday; their customs and traditions are in accord with the teachings in God's Word. Many such families find opportunity to refresh their spiritual lives during Advent, the four weeks that precede Christmas.

The word Advent means coming. It is a time of preparation for the coming of the Son of God as a man, and a hopeful reminder to Christians that the Lord has promised to return. During these weeks family devotions stress a call to repentance so that hearts may be properly prepared for His coming.

Two of the most common customs among Christians during this time are the use of an Advent wreath and Advent calendar, and family devotions center around their use. Either may be purchased in a Christian bookstore, but the family may find more pleasure in

creating their own. The wreath can be fashioned of pine branches that are inserted in a ring of styrofoam or wired to a metal frame. Four candles should be inserted. The first candle is called the "prophecy candle" and is lighted at the beginning of devotions during the first week. Devotions would be planned around the Old Testament prophecies of Christ.

The second candle is called the "Bethlehem candle" and serves to remind Christians that the Lord Jesus left the glories of His heavenly home to come to earth as a babe. The second and first candles should be lighted the second week and suitable Scripture readings chosen.

During the third week the "shepherds' candle" is added to the first two as a reminder of responsibility to share the message of the birth of Christ as the shepherds did. The "angels' candle" is lighted on the fourth week to bring to mind the promise that the Lord will return to take those who believe in Him to heaven to live eternally with Him.

Most Advent calendars are designed to serve from the beginning of Advent through Epiphany. Windows on the calendars are marked so they can be opened on the proper day, and Scripture readings are usually included. They are most effective when placed so light can shine through the opened

windows.

Variations of the calendar are used in many homes. Families with young children find it interesting to make a large Christmas tree of felt or other material that contains a pocket for each day of Advent. Each pocket holds a suggested Scripture reading and a tiny item of interest that is symbolic of Christmas—a tiny star or bell that may later become a tree ornament, or a small cookie cutter that could be used by the children as they help with the holiday baking.

Families with older children would enjoy creating a large calendar that includes not only Scripture references and prayer reminders, but also a schedule of dates for Christmas preparations (shopping, baking, etc.) and practical suggestions for deeds that reflect the spirit of Christmas.

There are endless possibilities during Advent to emphasize the spiritual aspect of those things that have become symbolic of Christmas even to the world. The Christmas lights can be a reminder that Jesus was the "true light that enlightens every man," evergreen wreaths are symbolic of the truth that God has always been—He has no beginning or end—He is always the same. The singing of Christmas Carols began with a heavenly choir that sang over a Judean hill on the first Christmas, and the sharp thorns and red berries of the holly bring to mind the crown of thorns. The list of symbols will go on and on.

Whatever the custom, it must be used reverently as a means of strengthening the family's relationship with Christ and joyfully to help the various members express their gladness at the birth of the Savior. It is an enriching experience for the family to join in happy anticipation of the Lord's coming. Prepared hearts can truly sing:

Dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

(These same suggestions might be adapted for use in the worship service in Sunday school.)

CHURCH-WORLD NEWS

GLEANINGS FROM AN EDITOR'S READING

It was an impressive moment when, near the finish of the consultation (the United Bible Societies), Professor Hendrik Kraemer, the distinguished Dutch missionary and theologian, now showing the declining strength of a life lived long and strenuously, was persuaded to step in and address the group. "If," said he, "you are concerned only about format, binding, colors, reading aids, you are on the wrong track. The question is: What is the church *doing* with the Bible?"—Dr. Paul S. Rees in *Bible Society Record*, Nov., 1964.

Of course, we are all for justice for the minority, for those who do not wish to say prayers at school. But what about justice for the majority who do wish to pray? Have they no right to justice? Have not the mothers and fathers of this land, who would like their children to say a simple prayer at the opening of school and listen to some reading from the Bible, some rights? Is there something fatal about saying prayers and reading from the Bible in school? If so, it is a wonder that this country has progressed so well until now. As you look around the nation today, would you feel that we morally and spiritually are better than our forefathers because we are excluding the saying of prayers and the reading of the Bible in our schools?—Terence J. Finlay in *Christian Economics*, Oct. 20, 1964.

I don't think there is any conflict at all between science and the Scriptures. I think we have misinterpreted the Scriptures many times, and we have tried to make the Scriptures say things that they weren't meant to say. The Bible is not a book of science. The Bible is a book of redemption. Of course I accept the creation story. I believe that God did create the uni-

verse. I believe he created man. Whether it came by... a process and at a certain point he took this being and made him a living soul or not, does not change the fact that God did create man.

I personally believe that it is (easier) to accept the statement that God breathed upon man and he became a living soul (than) to accept the claim that it started with some protoplasm and went up through the evolutionary process. In either case it is by faith, and whichever way God did it, makes no difference as to what man is, and what man's relationship to God is.—Billy Graham in *Decision*, Oct., 1964. (*This statement by Mr. Graham surprises us and we wonder if he will not clarify this later.*—Ed.)

Whatever our environment, college or office, university or factory, summer camp or city street, our life is a living relationship with the Christ who is Savior and Lord, or it is that bondage which is still slavery to sin, a doing what we would. Granted that the devil is everywhere and has greater opportunity in some places than others. The Lord of sin, death, and the devil has declared: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!" It would be strange if that did not include a college campus!—William A. Buege in *Arena*, Sept., 1964.

The whole internal system of the Roman Catholic Church has been unalterably fixed by innerant dogmas proclaimed by infallible popes. It may add new dogmas, but past and present dogmas, being sacrosanct and infallible, are irrevocable and cannot be contradicted, deleted, or changed. Although her internal appearance may be altered, the basic nature of Roman Catholicism will not change.

It cannot change. Unlike all other churches, for it to change would destroy the whole foundation upon

which it rests. It speaks much about the unity of all Christendom, but listen carefully and you will realize that the way to unity is a one-way road which all other professing Christians must take, and it leads straight to Rome!—Paul R. Edwards in *Eternity*, Nov., 1964.

"Operation Abolition," the documentary film, is an edited compilation by the HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) of scenes filmed during the rioting (in San Francisco). It claims to be just that and nothing more. See it! Show it to your friends! As to its merits as a film, an authority writing in the *Catholic Transcript*, Hartford, Conn., has said, "As a professor of government I have reviewed a thousand such films, and shown several hundred to classes in political science and history. I would say this film is one of the best ten I have seen.... This film catches the Communist organizer "with his hand in the till." It is a sermon and a lesson how to stimulate and organize rioting, but the Communists never dreamed their apparatus was so evident. It is no wonder they go to such extremes to discredit it."

In accepting J. Edgar Hoover's testimony to the credibility of "Operation Abolition" (given earlier in the article), we Catholics have the satisfaction of knowing we are continuing the support the mass of our people have shown him from the beginning.—Rev. John E. Coogan, S.J., in *Our Sunday Visitor* (Roman Catholic), Nov. 1, 1964.

"Always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Eph. 5:20).

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3-5).

MISSOURI SYNOD ON DIALOGUE

Followers of Martin Luther will welcome dialogue with Roman Catholics if the latter will "test their doctrines, as Luther did, by the pronouncements of Scripture alone and not by any other standard," according to an official publication of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

In an editorial in its Oct. 27 issue, the Lutheran Witness declared that Lutherans "want to know whether the Roman Catholic Church still claims to be the 'Mother' Church, headed by a human 'Father,' to which all 'separated' Christians are invited to return or whether Rome has really opened the door to reconsideration of those doctrines and practices which cried out for the Reformation instituted by Luther."

—Minneapolis Star

ALC JUSTIFIES TAXATION OF CHURCH ENTERPRISES

Columbus, Ohio—(NLC)—The American Lutheran Church at its second general convention here adopted a position paper on church-state relations that justifies taxation of commercial enterprises operated by churches.

Churches owning properties and conducting business "not exclusively and solely essential" to their religious, charitable and educational ministry, the statement said, "ought to be subject to tax laws and policies equally applicable to those governing profit-seeking individuals, partnerships, and corporations."

It also said churches should be willing to accept "equitable taxation" of parsonages and other dwellings owned by churches, associations of churches, or religious orders, in which their staff members reside.

The statement stressed that tax policies "should encourage personal contributions to voluntary, not-for-profit organizations of a charitable, health, educational, or religious character."

Tax exemptions of church buildings owned and used directly and

solely for worship, educational, and eleemosynary purposes, it said, "is sound exercise of public policy" because "it recognizes the contributions the church and its institutions make to community life."

However, the paper said it is "consistent with sound public policy" to levy upon churches non-discriminatory charges for municipal services, such as water, sewage, police, and fire protection.

A similar viewpoint on taxation was emphasized in another statement in which the convention condemned commercialism in the church as a stigma on its "good name and integrity."

It warned of the possible consequences when the church and its institutions take advantage of tax laws by engaging in activities unrelated to their religious purposes.

The practice, it said, "jeopardizes the tax immunity of the church and its institutions and may deprive its members and contributors of the privilege of income tax deductibility for their contributions."

"Such commercialism, we believe, interferes with and confuses the true task of the church, it weakens and impoverishes the spiritual life of the church, it exploits church membership for pecuniary advantage, and it damages the non-members' picture of the church," the paper said.

"We hold that the church, including its congregations, auxiliaries, and institutions, must be a public example of faithful obedience to all rightful laws affecting its operations as a temporal organization."

The statement questioned whether commercialism currently is a serious problem in the ALC, but said the church faces "a constant temptation to turn to commercial and quasi-commercial sources for raising funds to support the mission of the church."

Cited as "particularly repugnant" to the ALC were such fund-raising methods as lotteries, games of chance, and "any others bearing even a taint of gambling, which frequently is forbidden by state

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law and always is an offense to the sensitive Christian conscience."

"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (I Thess. 5:18).