

# Encourage One Another!

We just purchased two copies of a Bible on computer program over Christmas. After sending one to Jenica for college, I used ours to look up the word "encourage" in the encyclopedia for Bible words. (For Mac users out there, we purchased Oak Tree Software's Accordance package for NIV which I highly recommend.)

Encourage is an important word in our mission statement - "to encourage people to discover, celebrate and use their unique gifts in the Lord's service." Here is what the New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words has to say:

*"But what does encourage mean? Encouragement strengthens and calls forth renewed commitment. Typically believers are*

*encouraged to some godly course of action. Many were encouraged by Paul's chains to "speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly" (Phil 1:14). The apostle encouraged believers in Thessalonica to "walk worthy of God" (1 Thess*

*2:12). He told them God's grace and love are intended to "encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (2 Thess 2:17). " There is a subjective aspect to encouragement. The purpose of*

*encouragement is that we may be strengthened for fresh faith and obedience. How beautiful then is the gift of encouraging (Rom 12:8). Those with this spiritual gift are able to strengthen others enabling them to win fresh victories in their Christian lives."*

The spiritual gift of encouraging. I like that. I think it is one of our gifts. But lots of other people have it as well. As is the case with many of God's gifts, you often get more back in return when you use it. We hope we are encouraging to people in their faith walk--enabling them to win fresh victories in their Christian lives. But we receive much in return. We are encouraged through your feedback after performances, mail, email and the website.

**Thanks** to all of you for the encouragement and thanks to God for the gift of grace through Jesus Christ! Be bold in living your faith each day so that others may come to know the love of God for them too!†

Mark Schoepp  
Father Fitz

## What's New with Fitz Family...

Howdy everyone, this is Isaac (It Fitz). I'm the "Featured Fitz" for this newsletter so I'll start off by telling you a little about myself. I'm 17 and just finishing up my sophomore year in high school (due to my procrastination and our hectic schedule).

I am really excited about this year for Fitz Family. We're doing 3 Youth Encounter High school events and those are always fun. We also just found out we are going to be at the National Lutheran Youth Gathering in New Orleans this year. We were in Atlanta for the last one but this time we are going to have much more up front time in sectionals and outside the dome, etc. Also this year, we're hoping to get a backdrop to carry with us for our performances. Not only will it help focus attention because of a neutral background, but it will also provide a screen for when we get a power point projector

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## New Website in March

March 1 is the date for a new look on our web site- [www.fitzfamily.org](http://www.fitzfamily.org). We have some expert help from Kareen Hickman to make our presence on the web look more professional. The old site ([www.fitzfamily.com](http://www.fitzfamily.com)) is still up and running. However, the new site will be more streamlined and provide more up-to-date information. Check it out.



## "Supporting Cast... Cooperation Through the Arts"

We had a very unique experience this past November that teamed a public school, Mockingbird Elementary, with a Lutheran School, Abundant Life Lutheran School in Omaha, NE. A generous donor had a vision to see public and private school students and administration work together around drama, magic and juggling. Fitz Family teamed with A.J. the Animated Illusionist to teach juggling, magic, mime and drama to the students from both schools. The goal was a performance for family and friends at the end of two weeks to highlight the newly learned skills.

Cooperation was superb, the students made new friends, the school administration and staff are looking for new ways to cooperate and the performance was a hit! The students worked very hard. Since the final performance was held at the Lutheran School it was also a chance to share the Gospel!

This is a model that takes a generous donor (or donors) to make it happen, but provides lasting impact. For more information contact us or call Carol Mueller, principal at Abundant Life Lutheran in Omaha, NE.†

## The Twelve Days of Christmas 2000



*The five of us on stage in Minneapolis - good to have Jenica with us on tour, back from college*

**T**his past December we toured with George and Michael from Lost And Found...twelve cities, twelve days. This was our second tour with them. We covered one quarter of the U.S. and had weather ranging from balmy sixties to freezing rain and blizzards.

Although it was quite the tour with weather, we thoroughly enjoy our touring time with these two guys. If you have not experienced one of their concerts it is a unique treat. Check out [www.churchnoise.com](http://www.churchnoise.com). Plans are underway for a Christmas Tour 2001.†

*"May the Lord find you enthusiastically using your gifts and talents in service to those around you."*

## What's new continued...

(another thing on the Fitz wish list). Then I can fool around with commercials for our show, pre show video, images to be projected up during the show and so on. I love Computers!

Speaking of computers, Apple just came out with a new line of Powerbooks (they have G4 chips now - for those of you that are interested) and new towers (now you can write your own DVD movies). We're all drowning in my drool here.

I just finished Joshua Harris's new book 'Boy Meets Girl'. It's the sequel to his book 'I Kissed Dating Goodbye'. It's a

very good book and not only on the subject of dating. It has one of the clearest messages of grace I have ever read in any book. I would suggest both of his books to anyone, even adults.

Another thing I'm looking forward to this year is our Christmas tour in December with Lost and Found. We've done it for two years now and this year is looking very exciting, especially if we get the backdrop and projector. But that's still in the future and I have school work to get back to...†

## Churchnoise.com

Strange but true. We have recently joined an association of Christian performers - mostly from Lutheran circles - called Churchnoise. The purpose is to help each other be more effective in our ministries and to help our audiences get in touch with us. Visit the site-[www.churchnoise.com](http://www.churchnoise.com). It will allow you to get specific information about more than 30 different performing artists. You can see their schedule and even sign up to be notified by e-mail when your favorite performer(s) are coming to your area. Get info on Lost And Found, Echelon, Peder Eide, Don Wharton, Doug Larson, Jonathan Rundman and of course, the Fitz Family, plus many more!



Wheat Ridge was founded in 1905 as the Evangelical Lutheran Sanatorium in Wheat Ridge, Colorado to minister to Lutheran's suffering from tuberculosis and to train chaplains and social workers who served in tuberculosis sanatoria throughout the United States. Today, Wheat Ridge Ministries is recognized throughout the world as a pan Lutheran charitable organization that seeds new health and hope ministries in the name of the healing Christ.

Wheat Ridge Ministries fulfills its mission by granting, connecting and equipping.

#### Granting . . .

Wheat Ridge seeds new, innovative ministries by providing grants to projects in the following areas:

- Care and Development of Church Leaders
- Community Service Ministries
- Health and Wellness Ministries
- Generational Ministries
- International Health and Service Ministries
- Peace and Justice Issues

#### Connecting . . .

Wheat Ridge connects individuals who share a common interest in the health and healing of the whole person – body, mind and spirit. These connections often result in establishing new ministries that impact many lives.

#### Equipping . . .

Wheat Ridge equips people by hosting or sponsoring conferences, seminars and events and creating health-related resources that bring hope.

A few years ago, the **Fitz Family** became Area Representatives for Wheat Ridge and now partner in a hope-filled ministry that is bringing wellness to the hearts and souls of God's people in need.

*For more information about the ministry of Wheat Ridge, please contact the office at:*

One Pierce Place, Suite 250 E  
Itasca, IL 60143  
800.762.6748 • 630.762.6748  
wrmill@wheatridge.org  
www.wheatridge.org

## Meet Our Board of Directors

We are grateful for the nine individuals across the country who serve on the Fitz Family Board of Directors. We'd like you to meet two more.

Rich Gutekunst, serving as vice-president for Fitz Family Ministries, has his sights set on being the most humorous board member. A 1986 Concordia St. Paul DCE graduate, Rich currently serves at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Covington, LA. His areas of passion include youth and adult ministry with Fitz on the side. He is married to Nyla and they have three boys: Aaron, David and Nathan. In his spare time he likes to serve on the Fitz Board of Directors, fish with his kids, putz around in his shop and watch too much TV. His great sense of humor adds a new "filosofee" to our board.

We are pleased to have Bernie Huesmann of Faith Lutheran Church of East Wenatchee, WA on our board of directors. Born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, he later moved to Wisconsin. After a short time as a Chemical Engineering major, he realized that it wasn't going to work out very well and changed to pre-seminary studies. While in seminary, he participated in an exchange program spending 12 months studying in Oberursel,

Germany and later graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN. He served Trinity, Republic, WA for 3 years and during that time began Christ Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, British Columbia, Canada. He is married to Gretchen and they have four children: Tim, Amanda, Aaron and Grace. They enjoy camping, music, reading, playing games and playing with their Basset Hound, Gus. †

### Prayer concerns:

- that we would be encouraging to the people we meet and perform for.
- for creativity in planning our program so we can use our entertainment to bring a vision and a message.
- for health and travel safety.
- that the "exposure" events we have coming up would bear the fruit of additional contacts and performances ("exposure" events are ones that expose us to lots of people at one time who are responsible for booking performers like us into their churches and youth gatherings).

## A Donor-Supported Ministry

Fitz Family Ministries is sustained through financial contributions from individuals, churches and schools. Many, many thanks to those who have supported us in this past year. Your continued support enables us to "juggle" across the country

with the saving message of Jesus Christ. If the Lord has given you a heart for this ministry and the ability to give financial support we ask that you remember us. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

## Where in the World is Fitz Family?



We've asked that question before but this time we want you to identify the location of this picture. Enter our contest to win a Fitz Family T-shirt by giving us the correct city and state. To enter, go to our website [www.fitzfamily.org](http://www.fitzfamily.org) or send us a postcard with the correct location (city and state) along with your name, address and phone number (one entry per person). We will select one winner from the correct entries. Deadline for submissions is March 1, 2001. Have fun!

*"To encourage people to discover, celebrate and use  
their unique gifts in the Lord's service."*

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[www.fitzfamily.org](http://www.fitzfamily.org)

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## BOOKING INFO

We would really like to be at every church that contacts us but sadly we've had to turn churches down simply because we are not in that area of the country. We try to make sweeps of the United States and to avoid disappointment we encourage you to call and book us early. We will travel longer distances for larger events so you might consider organizing a larger event with other area churches. It is our hope to go to as many cities as is physically possible. Check our schedule for upcoming locations or call our office for more details.

## Schedule

### February 2001

- 3 Trinity Lutheran Church San Rafael CA
- 4 Trinity Lutheran Church Walnut Creek CA
- 5 Zion Lutheran San Francisco CA
- 9-11 ELCA Youth Workers Convention  
San Diego CA
- 13 Zion Lutheran Church Fallbrook CA
- 14 Holy Cross Lutheran, Cypress CA

### March 2001

- 2-4 Youth Congress Virginia Beach, VA
- 4 Trinity Lutheran Church Richmond VA
- 6 Fort Wayne Area Lutheran Schools  
Fort Wayne IN
- 8 Our Savior Lutheran School Louisville, KY
- 8 Christ Evangelical Church Louisville KY
- 9 Trinity Lutheran Elkhardt IN
- 10-12 Wheat Ridge Area Rep Meeting  
Chicago IL
- 13 St. John Lutheran School Lombard, IL
- 14 St. Peter Lutheran School Schaumburg, IL
- 14 St. Paul Lutheran Chicago IL
- 14 Lord of Life Lutheran La Fox IL
- 15 Messiah Lutheran School Chicago IL
- 15 Cross Lutheran School Yorkville IL
- 16-18 Chicago Youth Congress St. Charles IL
- 21-26 Atlanta area
- 29 Immanuel Lutheran School Brandon FL

### April 2001

- 1 Immanuel Lutheran Church Brandon FL
- 2 Community Lutheran School Plant City FL
- 7 Gloria Dei Lutheran Church Davie FL  
(sponsored by St. Mark/Hollywood, FL)
- 20 St. Matthew Lutheran Church Bel Air MD
- 21-22 Prince of Peace Lutheran, Springfield VA
- 29 Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church Acton MA
- 29 Christ the King Lutheran, Newtown CT

### May 2001

- 3 Good News Ministries Whittemore MI
- 4 St. Lorenz Lutheran Church Frankenmuth MI
- 5 Faith Lutheran Church Port Huron MI
- 6 St. Peter Lutheran Church St. John MI
- 11 St. John Lutheran, Freeland MI
- 12 Trinity Lutheran School Monroe MI
- 17 St. Thomas Lutheran School Eastpointe MI
- 18 Our Savior Lutheran Church Muskegon MI
- 20 First Lutheran Church Charlotte MI

### June 2001

- Northwest and Canada, June 13-July 18

### July 2001

- 28-8/1 LC-MS National Youth Gathering  
New Orleans LA

### August 2001

- 4 Christian Family Center Adrian MI

### September 2001

- 26-30 Youth Specialities Event Tampa FL