



Latin American Lutheran Mission CLARION

Vol. 70, No. 3

“You shall be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

June 2005

Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute Students Experience The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.



May 1, 2005 seven refreshing young adults in their second year at Lutheran Bible Institute – Canada arrived in Laredo for a briefing at the mission border station, obtained their visas and traveled to Saltillo, Coahuila which would be their hub of activity for the next two weeks. Their arrival was the culmination of a year of planning.

LBI's purpose was to expand their vision as world Christians and to instill a spirit of Christian servanthood. We accepted the challenge of partnering with LBI in this project because one of Latin American Lutheran Mission's goals is to foment Great Commission consciousness in individuals and in churches through short term experiences. Many who are in full time Christian service in many places around the globe today began to develop a vision for missions and cross cultural service through a short term experience, others through the same kind of experience returned to their homes with new insights into their own culture and a

renewed interest in their culturally diverse neighbors. And so many things happen on these teams that bring maturity, new understandings of the church, and of one's place in Christ's ministry. Many of the seven LBI students had already defined a future in ministry as pastors or missionaries.

Three different families hosted the LBI interns; each had been selected because one or more of the families members spoke English and could help with translating. This gave the Canadians a chance to experience life in a Mexican Christian family and through them what worship and life in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico is like. The two weeks went by so quickly with a variety of activities coordinated by Pastor Rogelio Balvantin, Director of the Bible Institute (front row far left): One day Pastor Bulmaro Velazquez (front row far right) took the guys to help with a

continued on the following page

worship service and Bible study in the large regional prison in Saltillo; another day the entire group visited our rural congregation in the small town of Huachichil, the group fellowshiped with the ELCM's Bible Institute students, played and worshipped with them and went with them on Fridays to do street and bus evangelism.

There were many tears in the eyes of both Canadians and Mexican host families as we shared together recollections, memorable moments, and prayers of blessing for the group's next step as they left to catch a flight for Puebla, Mexico to spend the last two weeks of May with representatives of the World Mission Prayer League in Southern Mexico. The feeling of closeness and Christian family was a frequently expressed emotion, a closeness that transcended the understandable frustrations with not being able to speak each other's language, the mutual sensing of God's presence and blessing in each other's lives. It was such a blessing to hear how their hearts had been touched by a realization of the



Front row: Darcy, Crystal, Andrea, Brent Back row: Jonathan, Tamara, "AJ"

global interconnectedness of Christians across cultural and racial barriers.

Latin American Lutheran Mission

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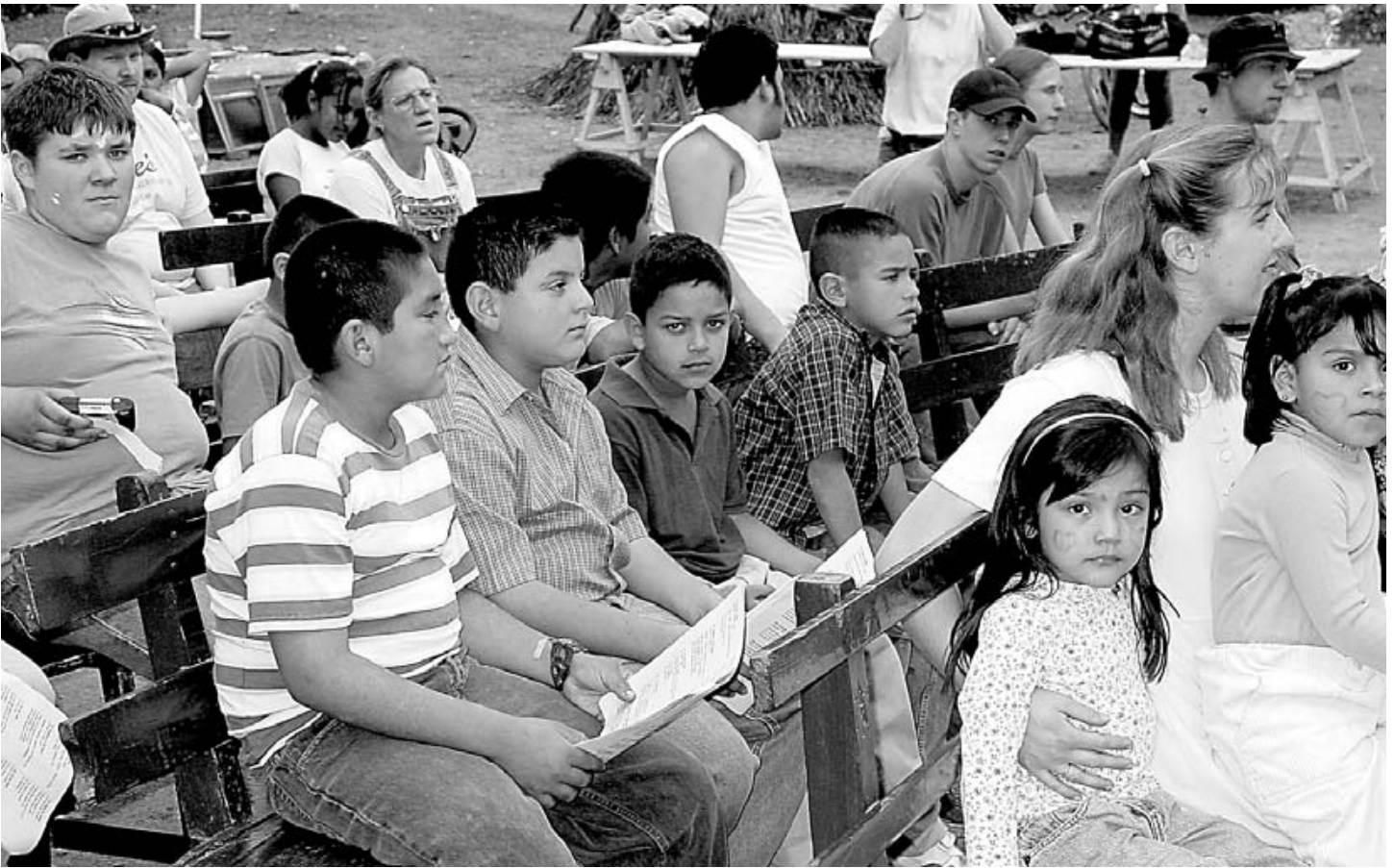
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Latin American Lutheran Mission Clarion

The Clarion is published bimonthly by LALM for friends of the Mission and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. If you wish to be a prayer helper in this Mission for Mexico and would like to receive the Clarion, please contact the Editor at the address listed under "Mission Staff." There is no specific subscription price for the Clarion, but for those who wish to and have the means to help LALM with its cost, it is about \$3.00 per year for each mailing address. Please send contributions to our Treasurer at the address listed under "Mission Staff."

Publication deadline for the next Clarion issue is July 8, 2005.

Donations for LALM should be mailed to:
PO Box 17385, Minneapolis, MN 55417-7385



Testimonies from past Teams

Seven adults rode South to Laredo, Texas in a van as acquaintances but we rode North to Minnesota ten days later as a family. Sharing experiences of a wide variety: personal, spiritual, humorous, emotional, that's what a special mission like this one does to a group.

We here live our lives. Some of what we experienced shows many who just exist.

We worked with what we had where we were. We shared our faith with each other and with those we met. Even with the language barrier, you could feel the love and the presence of the Lord. A smile goes a long way. We went to bed tired but satisfied, although at times we felt we had done so little. I guess we have to be thankful we were able to accomplish one small mission in the overall picture of the whole. And you know what? I'd go back tomorrow. We gave but we got more!

Sincerely,
E. Gladys Anderson

As our bus approached Villa Mainero I was excited to see the mountainous landscape we were driving through. The bus seemed filled with anticipation. After arriving in Villa Mainero, Pastor Ulises Lopez and his wife Rocio warmly greeted us and welcomed us into their outdoor kitchen where they had prepared a delicious taco meal for the whole crew! Throughout our time there I was impressed and humbled by the hospitality and generosity of our Mexican brothers and sisters. I got to stay in a host home with five other girls. We were amazed to find out that our hostess and

her family cleared out of her house and let each of us have our own double bed. Every morning we rose early and she fixed us coffee and rolls before leaving for the church. We worked every day on projects at the church and spent time preparing for the children's ministry and evening services. It was great to see how everything worked out. Though we were just getting to know each other on the team, we had a common goal and purpose. Attitudes were good.

Each night more and more of the neighborhood children and adults came to our services. It was so hard to leave these precious children after five days. They were so affectionate, well-dressed and polite. I trust that God will take the seeds we planted in their lives and make them grow. We were especially praying and interceding for the last two nights. The last evenings as we showed the Jesus film, Pastor Ulises preached a simply Gospel message and there were some who accepted the Lord.

I was so blessed by the fellowship and close bond we had in Christ even though many of us could not communicate in the same language. The Lopez children were also such a blessing. It was so evident that Ulises and Rocio have done an excellent job in training them. I could say so much more. I hope that some day I can come back to this beautiful place and to the wonderful people of Villa Mainero. In those few days the Lord taught me so much and continued to confirm my desire and call to be a missionary.

Love in Jesus,
Teresa Nuckols

Pastors' Kids Education

How Does a Pastor Living Hand to Mouth Educate His Children In College?

This is exactly the question that the mission has struggled with over the years. In our commitment to the missional priority of developing churches that support their own pastors and pay for their own maintenance, we have seen that frequently the gifted children of our Mexican pastors have not had the financial resources to go on to College in Mexico. Little churches in rural areas cannot shoulder that responsibility. For that reason we have taken on a strategic commitment to help those gifted kids go as far as they can. Some day their vocational success could become the safety net under their parents in their senior years. At present there are three young adults from three different pastoral families who look to the Lord, and to the mission for scholarship help, two young women and one young man.

In the Red

We mention this urgency because we know there are supporters of this mission that, knowing this need, would love to help. And, you need to know that the fund we have established for this purpose is currently in the red. I have taken the liberty to translate a brief note of thanks from one of our talented PKs who has received this help:

Letter from A Budding Leader

"My name is Glenn Estrada Jr. and I'm currently in the fourth semester at the University of Nuevo Leon in Monterrey, Mexico. I'm preparing for a future in information technology. I



Pastor Juan de Leon's daughter, Yadira Arheli, age 17, studies cosmetology.

want to thank all the dear brothers and sisters in Christ in the network of the Latin American Lutheran Mission who have collaborated with financial gifts for my education. I can't tell you what it means to be able to receive this great help which makes it possible for me to continue my studies. I know that without it, it would be all but impossible for me to stay in school because the costs are way more than my parents on their meager income could afford. I give thanks to God for people like you and I pray that the Lord will repay you for your generosity in helping me finish my training.

LALM Gospel Bookstore Robbed

Did you know that the mission has a Gospel Bookstore? If you've been to our border station or followed the course of the LALM over the years, you know the answer to that question. A vital part of our ministry has been supporting the Evangelical effort in this region through providing Bibles and Christian literature in Spanish to the Laredo community and to the church of Mexico.

On April 29 around midnight Barb and I arrived in Laredo from having attended the LALM semi-annual board meeting in Minnesota. However, on our arrival we discovered the bookstore had been broken into, and a large sum of funds ready for deposit had been stolen. The police were called immediately and Crime Stoppers put information on several local television and radio stations offering a reward for information leading to the apprehension of the thief. Investigators were able to discover that the back door had been forced open after the bookstore had closed down, and before we arrived. Neither attempts to obtain finger prints nor other efforts have produced any leads. The bookstore has not had special security equipment on the premises.

We have taken the precaution to change both the front and back doors to try to make the building more secure and soon we will obtain some kind of electronic device to guard our property.

We live in a neighborhood that has become increasingly transient, all of our neighbors seem assured that all is well, but the police inform us that as properties have gotten older,

the complexion of the neighborhood has changed.

With the prevalence of drug use, etc. one needs to take measures. Somewhere in between, "Joyfully accept the plundering of your property" (Hebrews 10:34) and "Be wise as serpents" (Mt. 10:16) lies a place for the faith which holds a light hand on this

worlds' goods, but the wisdom to exercise a stewardship of protection for what God has entrusted. Thankfully no one was hurt, and no physical damage was done to equipment or to our personal effects. We pray that this story may have a happy ending, but that ending may be only known to the Lord, though we pray for the conviction of sin to come upon the thief so that his real needs can be met in Jesus.



New door for Gospel Bookstore after robbery.

Confraternidad Quarterly Pastor's Conference at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo May 25-27

The quarterly conference for the 20 pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico was held in Nuevo Laredo, right next door to us. Calvary Lutheran is building a large new church that will have plenty of space when completed, plus it has two missions in outlying areas. Pastor Antonio Tirado and Maria Elena de Tirado are the pastoral couple in charge at El Calvario. The Tirados are both lawyers active in their chosen field besides their call to pastor the church. Maria Elena met Antonio in the law firm they both worked in at the time, and through his testimony she became a Christian, having grown up with an atheist father. Antonio serves presently as the Secretary of the ELCM and Maria Elena is the president of the women's movement. Aureliano Ortega is their associate who works with the missions.

The theme of the May conference was "Leadership for a New Generation." The conference speaker was Pr. Jose Luis Aguilar Cano. Jose Luis and his wife Rachel pastor The Rose of Sharon Center for the Christian Family, a growing church on the outskirts of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico. He made a decision to follow Jesus when he was a youth, then backslid into a worldly lifestyle until he discovered he had cancer in 1980. This was the wake up call for him, and the outcome of his battle with cancer was that he is not only now healthy and cancer free but a powerful work of God was begun in his life that has issued in a fruitful ministry both in evangelism as well



Jose Luis and Rachel Aguilar

as teaching. Jose Luis was seeking a fresh word from God for the pastors and God poured out his Spirit in a marvelous way to reignite passion for Jesus and further equip his servants in the ELCM for ministry. We are praying that these new impartations will in fact make our current pastors and those in training become leaders for a new generation.

When The News Affects Our Ministry

Nuevo Laredo, our sister city across the Rio Grande in Mexico, has been in the national news recently because of various incidents of disappearances and violence, probably related to internal struggles for leadership in the drug cartels of Mexico. For this reason and others the U.S. State department has posted on its website a warning about the possible dangers to U.S. citizens traveling to Mexico. The national television networks have been present in the streets and markets of Nuevo Laredo. They want to interview tourists whether they have seen or experienced any of this illegal activity in their stay in Mexico. Neither we nor our teams have seen or experienced any such thing either in Nuevo Laredo or passing through the city.

Here at the border station where we process the registrations for nearly thirty short term groups of youth and adults desiring to serve the church of Mexico we have been receiving many calls about whether it's safe to travel in Mexico this summer. Some teams have cancelled their plan to minister in Mexico because of the State

Department's travel warnings. Our answer is always that we must be realistic about these kind of problems. We don't want to ignore or minimize dangers that can exist. In fact some of these are not new but have been characteristic of border areas here as in other countries of the world. Border areas can have a high incidence of illegal traffic, black market activity, undocumented immigrants, and drug trade. And because of these things the potential for violence is there.

Because the violence clusters around people involved in illegal activities and night life and our people are not anywhere near these people or places, we come and go in peace in Mexico. Every week, sometimes every day, we do business in Nuevo Laredo or go through the city on the way to the Lutheran Churches of Mexico without incident.

But we continue to ask for prayers for the safety of all who travel through Latin American Lutheran Mission to bless the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.

Recent Weddings in the ELCM Family

We never know how blessed we are to have a life partner until we lose that most important person. When accompanying one of the ministry teams last summer I had a special chance to talk with one of our senior members on the Pastors' roster of the ELCM, Rev. Eduardo Aguillon, now a man in his seventies. He poured out his heart about how difficult his life had become these last six years, and unbearably lonely, following the death of his precious wife. I remember the tears we shed as we prayed for his emotional healing and for fresh grace upon his ministry at Mt. Sinai Lutheran in El Potosi, a congregation he had served years before with his previous wife. What a pleasant surprise it was in late March to hear from Eduardo that God had blessed him with a new partner, single since the death of her husband, and willing to be a preacher's wife. The plan was set to be married in April. Both had children from their first marriages and all the children were in agreement that this would be a great match. Though we missed the wedding because of the LALM board meeting in Minnesota, recently we were able to meet Rafaela, his new wife, who had made the parsonage her "nest," a woman with a wonderful faith in Christ.



Rev. Eduardo and Rafaela Aguillon

The other wedding, on the opposite end of the age spectrum, was the wedding of Pastor Carlos and Anna de Leon's daughter Abigail in Rio Bravo. Abigail has been studying for a career in music, and it was in that context she met her husband to be, Jonathan. On a recent and very typically hot and humid afternoon at "The Sower" Lutheran in Rio Bravo I had the privilege of officiating at Abigail's wedding, my first Mexican wedding. The preacher made a few mistakes (I forgot to invite the couple to do the ceremonial "smooch" at the end of the ceremony! But Abigail's father came forward to make sure this important detail didn't get forgotten!) Did you know that in a Mexican wedding, in addition to the customary rings, the couple receives small pillows they kneel upon at the altar, symbolizing their commitment to prayer, the groom presents coins to the bride, symbolic of his commitment to support her and their family, and the couple is draped with a decorative lasso, symbol of marital unity? The knot is tied. The vows were said. The young couple are both sincere Christians and will make their home for the time being in Michigan.



Abigail de Leon and her new husband Jonathan

Photos from the Pastors Wives Conference in Nuevo Laredo.





Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in March through April of 2005. The LALM Board of Directors and staff are grateful for all these gifts as well as those gifts of time and talents. (If you do not want to be recognized by the Clarion for your gift, please send a note along with your contribution to the Treasurer/Financial Secretary stating your desire for anonymity.) We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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In memory of Millie Connick
In memory of Cora Domholdt

In memory of Marlin Flann
In memory of Ray Johnson
In memory of Gen Lownsbury
In memory of Elsie Swenson
In memory of Tom Stutzka
In memory of Noval Torkelson
In memory of Lyell Wayland

Organizations

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Fertile Lutheran Church ~ Fertile, IA
Karl Roeske's Church ~ Austin, TX
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LALM – Prayer Warriors

June 2005

“I want the men everywhere to lift up holy hands....”
—1 Timothy 2:8

Thanksgiving

1. For a fruitful semi-annual board meeting in April in Minneapolis. For the time, enthusiasm and thoughtful participation of our LALM board members.
2. Thank you to the World Mission Prayer League for hosting us.
3. For the coordinating of Pastor Roger Ose and Janet in filling our van with many donated items.
4. For the faithfulness and encouragement of the pastors and families of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico experienced every time we visit them.
5. For the two years of part time help that Jesse Vasquez gave to our Gospel Bookstore before his recent resignation. For our fellow staffers here in the Bookstore: Elvira Ruiz and Carmen Hernandez.
6. For local friends and helpers the Lord brings forward to help us in practical ways here at the border station.
7. For Javier Reyes our new Bible Institute student who has returned to continue the preparation he started some years ago.
8. For the referrals that come to us because of endorsements given by you our LALM praying supporters.
9. For a full calendar of short-term mission groups this summer.
10. For the blessings poured out on the pastors and their wives at Confraternidad, the pastors quarterly conference held in Nuevo Laredo May 25-27, 2005.

Petitions

1. For the financial needs of the mission and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. For new partners, both individuals and congregations, to enjoy, pray for and support this ministry.
2. For special grace, protection, and anointing upon Abigail de Leon and new husband, Jonathan, married recently in Rio Bravo, and on the 28 summer teams that serve here on the border and in Mexico from June 5–August 19.
3. For Elizabeth Paschka our Summer Intern as she works with teams and spends time in Mexico June 1-July 15.
4. For the recovery of the funds stolen from the Bookstore in a robbery in April, just a few hours before we returned to Laredo from Minnesota.
5. For Pr. David Aguillon’s family as they begin their new assignment in Huachichil.
6. For the continued preparation of those in the Bible Institute and for Rogelio Balvantin the director.
7. For Pr. Bulmaro Velazquez’s wife, Petra, as she recovers from a collapsed lung.
8. For special wisdom and spiritual vision to be given to the newly formed directorate of the ELCM.
9. For blessings upon Pr. Eduardo Aguillon’s recent marriage to Rafaela after years of being a widower.

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