



Latin American Lutheran Mission CLARION

Vol. 70, No. 2

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

April 2005

Christ’s Mission in Mexico: The February and March Teams

Faith Lutheran of Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota — February 11-21, 2005

A team of ten happy Christians from Minnesota’s Iron Range arrived in Laredo to work at the border station and to experience the Lutheran Church in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico during the second full week of February. They brought with them a plan to be spiritually enriched through their times of devotion and worship (they loved to sing and harmonize), a determination to finish some important projects and the freedom to have lots of fun each day. Never a dull moment, believe me. Upon their arrival they took on the huge task of sorting through hundreds of boxes of donated clothing and ferrying it across the border to a storage room. We had



carefully kept one big secret, their desire to replace Pr. Ricardo Dominguez’s tools stolen when his house was broken into over the Thanksgiving holiday. What a treat to see his face as box after box of various tools were opened in our “little surprise” party for Ricardo after dinner one evening. You will see references to the other memorable times in their letters which follow:

Dear LALM,

Grace and peace to you from Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota. Let me start by saying thank you to the Ericksons and Ricardo Dominguez for sharing your faith with all of us. It was great to get to know them, and a joy to be able to share our faith and our willingness to work for the Lord. It was wonderful

to see God’s love alive and moving in the hearts of all the people we were able to share with. May God continue to bless you and carry you through your various ministries.



The working, the sharing of God’s Word through song, worship and fellowship were very moving. I truly believe we have received more than we gave. There are many thoughts still in my heart. I will never forget the church service in Nuevo Laredo at Calvary Lutheran. I was deeply touched by the children as they stood to ask for prayers for their families. Wow! What a moving service. God’s presence was surely there. The openness to share God’s love was overwhelming. Even if I didn’t know what they were saying, I could feel God’s presence.

For me, it was a mind opener to see the churches in different stages of construction. And our conversations with LALM border staff gave us a whole new outlook on the people of Mexico; what a proud people they are. Their friendship was poured out on us, their giving of what they have to us. Americans seem to want to give more monetary things, but now I think it is more important to give of one’s self, by sharing our faith and the talents God has given us. It’s challenging to understand other countries and cultures, how people exist with what they have and in many cases what they don’t have. I keep on seeing the man in the wheelchair in the street. The need to help is there, but what do we do about it? Sometimes I feel that prayer just isn’t enough. We have a tendency to forget to let God handle our prayers. One of the greatest dangers in today’s world is that we think we can do it ourselves. I thank God for watching over us while we made our trips to Mexico and I pray that the things we brought will be a blessing to needy people there.

God lives and reigns now and forever.

God’s blessing to all at LALM and the Lutheran Church of Mexico.

—Art Cherro

Dear LALM,

I can’t seem to put my feelings and thoughts into words. For a while now I keep hearing the words of 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now abides faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.” Maybe God is telling me what to say so I will call this trip, “The Trip of Love.”

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“Orphan Grain Train”

What is the Orphan Grain Train ministry? It is a ministry of mercy that was begun within the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. They have developed several regional centers that receive donated items and commodities, and transport them to needy people. They prefer to work with organizations that will guarantee the delivery of these materials to those who need them, organizations like Latin American Lutheran Mission.

In the last week of January a beautiful yellow semi pulled into Laredo from Wisconsin filled with over 1,300 boxes of used clothing, kitchen supplies, linens and curtains, toys, and shoes, as well as mattresses, box springs, furniture, and nursery supplies. We were fortunate to have a crew of willing servants at our border station to help us unload the semi. We were also doubly blessed to have warehouse space in which to temporarily store it all, available to us through the generosity of a member of Faith Lutheran Church here in Laredo. That same week a large team arrived from North Dakota and with them a pick-up pulling a trailer of materials from Orphan Grain Train’s Nebraska distribution center. This team which worked in Nuevo Laredo each day was able to transport through the border an enormous amount of donated items with which to bless the needy families in and around Calvary Lutheran, Grace Alone Lutheran and Faith Alone Lutheran Churches.

LALM is able to receive items from time to time from those who remember us and make the special effort to come here. We can usually store and sort these materials at our border station, and later distribute them with the help of teams that come through, or on our own trips to the churches of the ELCM. But when it’s a semi load we need a warehouse! Then load by load we process it all. Sometimes our pastors who have vehicles come up to the border to bring things down to their churches. We make the clothing available to many other evangelical churches in the borderland area as well. It’s fun to spread the blessing around, and a joy to receive the excited phone calls from grateful recipients. These items may have had their first life in someone’s home “Up North” but through the generosity and efficiency of Orphan Grain Train they have another life here on the border and in Mexico. Twice is nice. And what a good stewardship of the Lord’s resources.



Latin American Lutheran Mission ELC-M Partners Who Help Proclaim the Gospel

Incorporated in 1936, LALM is a faith mission depending entirely upon God for the supplying of its needs through the prayer and freewill offerings of His people as the Holy Spirit moves them. LALM is an independent Lutheran organization, having members on its Board of Directors from various Lutheran bodies. To learn more about LALM, please feel free to contact the board member nearest you.

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Latin American Lutheran Mission Clarion

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Publication deadline for the next Clarion issue is June 6, 2005.

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

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Faith that God called me to go to Mexico and help do what I could.

Hope that what I did will help the mission in its work in Mexico.

Hope that the people at the border station in Laredo don't get burned out, and that they will continue to get the help they need.

Hope that other people will be called to serve and they will accept the call.

But I keep coming back to...

Love.

The love of God.

The love of the people that came together

for worship, work, praying,

singing, playing, and laughing together.

That God's love is everywhere we go.

The love of the pastors that work hard to start a new church.

The love of the people of the church as they build a building to worship in

(that must seem to take forever).

The love of people who have gathered and sent clothes for those in need.

Love goes on and on.

What we did, too is part of that love: sorting clothes and moving them to Mexico, enclosing the duct work in the guest house, installing windows, insulating and sheet-rocking in Norma's house. Our worship experience at Calvary as we sang Beautiful Savior in English and "The Fisherman" in Spanish (thanks Pastor Erickson for playing your guitar for us!).



I came back tired but I am waiting for the Lord to call us to return again to serve as we are able.

With God's love,
Ron Barteck

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

by Barb Erickson

Dick began coming down to LALM in 1986 when he worked with the Lay Ministry Training Center in Roseville, Minnesota. Back then it was LMTC teams going to the youth conferences around Easter. Then he came down for many years teaching at the pastor's quarterly conferences. Meeting three times a year, the pastors knew each other and Dick knew them. I went to a couple pastor's conferences to meet their wives, but they didn't come. When visiting the churches last fall, I had a lot to learn as a new co-director with Dick for the Latin American Lutheran Mission. With eyes and heart open wide, I visited each church, each home, each family and met each pastor and his wife. I saw the needs of the church, the home and the family. My heart went out for these women. I had never been involved with women's ministry, but now their needs rested on my heart.

One by one, I told them that I would like to see them come to the next pastor's conference in January of this year. And they came. When visiting with Rachel Huerta de Villereal, her face brightened when I told her I'd like to see the women of the church come together to begin a national women's ministry. She told me she had been dreaming of that for years. I received that response from Doraelia Velaquez de Salazar. Then in December, the three of us got together in Monterrey to plan a program for when the pastor's wives came together in January. To my surprise, Rachel and Doraelia hardly knew each other, though they both grew up in the Lutheran Church of Mexico. When we gathered together in January, we had fourteen women in attendance. Doraelia and Rachel were now close friends. I too felt an unusual bonding with them. Two older women



who worked with the church from the beginning also were with us. Five of the pastor's wives didn't attend. When writing their names on slips of paper for the drawings, I realized these women didn't even know each others names.

In between sessions, we had drawing of names for sheet sets, towel sets, and clothing. Our sessions were centered around worship, testimony, decisions about organizing as a women's ministry and finally voting for a directorate. Maria Elena de Tirado from Nuevo Laredo was elected president, Anna de Leon from Rio Bravo was elected vice president, Esperanza de Reyes from Saltillo was elected treasurer, and Gabriela de Cortez from San Rafael was elected secretary. This vote is provisional and will be ratified at the next conference in May. When the question came up as to who had an organized women's society in their church, only four of the churches represented were organized. Many women asked how to go about organizing their church women. This will be the focus for the next conference. Both Maria Elena and Anna have organized their women into a women's ministry. They will be a great asset to the church. At the evening service, when asked what part I, Barb, play in this, they all chimed in "she's our advisor." Help! I've never worked with women's ministries before. Got any input?

Lay Ministry Training Center Serves “River Jordan” Lutheran in Villa Mainero

February 26-March 4 a large group of forty coordinated by Pastor Dave Jore of the Lay Ministry Training Center of St. Paul, Minnesota chose to minister with one of our Lutheran Churches farthest in from the border, several hours South of Monterrey, River Jordan Lutheran pastored by the Ulyses Lopez family. Many in this team were from Lutheran Church of the Master in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. They worked with the children in the afternoons, showed the Jesus



film in the evenings (on the last evening a woman accepted Jesus as her Savior), did some work for a neighboring pastor, and replaced the damaged floor of River Jordan. They also worked on a bathroom for the parsonage and repaired the

roof. It was a full week. The team left a powerful witness in their service and they went home with a vision for the ministry of Pastor Lopez and River Jordan. Thank you, LMTC and Lutheran Church of the Master.

Two teams came with St. Andrew Missionary Society of Casselton, North Dakota

The first stayed at Hobart Hall at the border station and crossed the border each day from **January 31 to February 5** to work in the mission churches Grace Alone and Faith Alone. It was a cool and rainy week so we slogged through the mud to hand out Bibles, invitations to children’s classes and to community health classes offered by nurses on the team. Our muddy feet were a reminder of the prophet’s words, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of them that bring good news.” They replaced the tin roof of Grace

Alone and made great progress on the outdoor bathrooms for Faith Alone. They had time to do a lot of clean up as well. Then **March 14-19** a second team composed mainly of students from Oklahoma devoted themselves to various projects at “Upper Room” Lutheran in La Boca del Refugio pastored by the Homero Cortez family. In addition to daily working with 85 children, the group did a ton of painting, repaired the plumbing and worked on a new septic tank for the parsonage, in spite of being hailed out (that’s right) on one day and waking up to snow on the ground the day before returning to the border (can you believe it?). Bless you Kirk and Judy Rosin for your coordination of these teams.



Messiah Lutheran of Indianapolis shares its witness at “Bethany” in Apodaca.

February 5-12 a team of 13 came prepared to repair the roof of both the parsonage and church at Bethany Lutheran in Apodaca, a Northern suburb of Monterrey. They weather-proofed the exterior of the parsonage as well as other repairs and upgrades. In addition to their brick and mortar work, they witnessed as a team in the large plaza in downtown Monterrey. This team ministered powerfully with a homeless man who was given refuge at Bethany and sensed God creating a new beachhead of hope in Christ in this man’s life. Messiah is another group that really has fun serving Jesus in Mexico and in their closing meal together we roared with laughter as they shared their stories of the week in Apodaca. Thanks and see you next year!



Border Volunteers

One of the unique blessings of the winter months at the border station are the visits of many volunteers. Most stay for a week or longer, either in our guest quarters, or behind Bethel Lutheran in their RVs or fifth wheels, and some prefer nearby Casa Blanca State Park which has wonderful RV hook ups. Casa Blanca is located on a lake (yes, there are lakes in South Texas! Good for stripper, crappie and catfish I’m told.) and only five minutes away. They come to help us with simple maintenance of our seven buildings, and with the inevitable repairs of washing machines and toilets, building shelves, cutting grass, painting, laundry, etc. Some come ready to do major construction like sheetrocking, carpentry, plumbing, and roofing. They come to experience life in the fellowship of the mission and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. They come to share their experience and their abilities. They come to give and to receive. Working together we have a lot of fun and we get to know each other in the Lord. In the evenings we eat together,

and among other things, sing and play games. Most are seniors but not all. Some are on vacation and stop here on their way to someplace else. Most have been here before and God calls them back again and again. They love to worship at Bethel. They love to kid around with Ricardo Dominguez. They love to feel part of the larger church of Christ through visiting the churches in Mexico. When they are here life is happy commotion and when they leave we are lonely, and wait for their soon return. Have you been a border volunteer with LALM?



We wish to thank Pastor Ricardo Dominguez and Barbara Erickson for the pictures they have shared with us in this and past issues. We look forward to many more to come.

Adopt a Sunday School

by Barb Erickson

I give a great deal of credit to the church I grew up in, for the spiritual formation of my life in Christ. My home was a good and godly environment, but Bible stories and learning about Jesus was missing from my home. That was left up to the church. When I was about to graduate from high school, I had a life transforming encounter with Jesus that headed me toward Bible School and the mission field. My thoughts at that time and are still today, "Thank God for Sunday School and children's ministries." Then for nearly thirty-five years, that became my focus in ministry.



I'M CONCERNED

Last fall as my husband Dick, Ricardo Dominguez and I went to visit the churches in Mexico, I kept my eyes open to the needs. I looked at the facilities given for Sunday School. Some churches had classrooms, others had nothing at all. Some class rooms were brightly painted and attractive, the loving work of a short term group. Other classrooms were bleak and lacked the bare necessities for teaching. With the double order of Sunday School curriculum our border station Gospel Bookstore received last fall, we began to distribute the excess materials to the ELCM. We asked many what materials they had been using, to my surprise, some had no curriculum and others were reusing materials they had just taught. Were they interested in getting this curriculum? Yes!!

MEETING THE NEED

At the women's gathering in January, I brought some blackboards and bulletin boards to hand out to those who wanted them. We also prepared a three drawer plastic container to fill with supplies for the Sunday School teachers. It was the grand prize drawing. "If you would like a container like this" I added, "write it down on your list of needs." One pastor's wife said, "We don't need to write this down, we all need these supplies." Al and Marilyn Hubin were wintering with us for a few days and took up the challenge to put some of these classroom supplies together. The Sunday Schools in Mexico will be so thankful to get these. A few weeks ago, Dick and I went up to Austin, Texas

to look over furnishings that Bethany Lutheran Church was offering to our mission. I spotted some small chairs and white boards that they had set aside. Would we like them? Yes!! I could already see them in La Boca, where Julia Cortez had explained in detail how she would like to have the Sunday School class fixed up. Last week Kirk Rosen's team from Oklahoma painted those rooms. It's exciting to see how the Lord is providing for these crying needs.

HOW TO PARTNER

To adopt a Sunday School, to partner with them in meeting their basic needs for teaching the Gospel to children and youth, requires a focus. I'm looking for churches who would like to partner with just one church for a year. That partnership can be extended. The curriculum comes out twice a year. This second half we purchased for the church and it came to a total of about \$600. That comes to about \$30 per church on the average. There are other needs as well that this focus could take. Bibles are needed, classroom furnishings, music tapes and players, videos and hookups to show them, are some of the ways to partner with the Mexican churches and their Sunday School. Have you done school kits in the past? We are out of them here on the border right now. Each church will need a fresh supply in the fall, when they are needed most for the new school year. The children are so thankful to get these school kits. Interested in adopting a Sunday School? The adoption process will be on a first come first serve basis. We will send you pictures of the Sunday School you choose, the curriculum, and the progress that you can be a part of. We'd also like to send them a photo of your Sunday School or group to make that special connection. If you would like to partner in Sunday School, please let us know soon.

Inspiration Bible Institute Update

With the new season of studies that began in January, the Bible Institute of the ELCM incorporates into its program practicums or internships. As an example, Cazildo Uriostegui will be serving Faith Alone mission in Nuevo Laredo during the month of April. Another full time student, Jorge Guerrero, would normally be using his gifts in this same way but developed a terrible infection, which became very complicated to cure. He is presently convalescing at home after surgery. Let's pray for his healing and restoration.

An exciting development has been the start of a cycle of twice monthly extension classes at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo. The teachers drive up from Saltillo for a class that numbered thirteen for its first offerings. Extension classes are one way to help equip and train those who are leading or who aspire to leadership. Their responsibilities do not permit them to leave home and attend a residential school of studies in another city. Pray for us as we seek for a new model for theological preparation for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.



Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in January through February 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 Marie Brinkman
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In memory of Melvin Schulz
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In memory of Norval Torkelson
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Honorariums

In Honor of H Sanford Haugen

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Special Note:

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LALM – Prayer Warriors

April 2005

“We always thank God... when we pray for you.” Colossians 1:3

Thanksgiving

1. For the donations of many serviceable items for the churches of Mexico.
2. For the willing servants elected to lead the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico in the next three years, and those elected to lead the women’s movement.
3. For the 25 loving helpers the Lord sent to the border January – March - just when we need them, and with just the skills required. They accomplished so much and lightened our load tremendously – and we had a lot of fun.
4. For the ministry and faithful witness of God’s people in far flung places in Mexico.
5. For the generosity of Faith Lutheran in Hoyt Lakes, MN who replaced all of Pastor Ricardo Dominguez’s stolen tools.
6. For the ministry of 191 people on nine teams of youth and adults from North Dakota, Minnesota, Indiana, and Texas that expressed their faith and love in word and deed here on the border and in Mexico.
7. For the donation of good furniture from Bethany Lutheran in Austin as they moved out of their old building. Thanks for thinking of us. It was fun to review with you the pictures of many teams from Bethany who have built up the church of Mexico.
8. For the wonderful faith and fellowship of our Border associate Pr. Ricardo Dominguez, and for our Gospel Bookstore staff Elvira Ruiz, Carmen Hernandez and Jesse Vasquez.
9. For Pastor Rogelio Balbantin and his wife Gloria’s leadership in the Inspiration Bible Institute and Extension Seminary. Their passion for the growth of the ELCM’s leaders and of Christ’s church is contagious.
10. For the faithful support of so many who pray and hold us before the Lord regularly. Your cards, letters, and calls and gifts seem to always arrive the day we need encouragement.

Petitions

“Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.” John 16:24

1. For the semi-annual board meeting Monday, April 25.
2. For the Spirit’s guidance in the formation of a new model for preparing and strengthening leaders for the ELCM.
3. For the Bible Institute students who spend the month of April in practical assignments in local congregations: Cazildo, Jesica, Efrain, and for Jorge as he recovers from surgery.
4. For the interns from Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute who will be living in homes in Saltillo, Mexico, experiencing life in the ELCM May 1-15.
5. For our border associate Pr. Ricardo Dominguez and his family as they support their sister in her struggle with terminal cancer.
6. For our new granddaughter Tiana Kay Erickson, and her parents Carl and Andrea Erickson; Tiana was born with the complications of cleft palate.
7. For us in leadership in the LALM and in the ELCM that God would continue to confirm new directions for outreach, and the courage to obey His leading.
8. For the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be upon Pr. Joaquin Figueroa the conference speaker for the quarterly pastors’ “Confraternidad,” May 18-20, 2005 in Nuevo Laredo.
9. For the spiritual preparation of the 26+ teams that have confirmed dates and short term assignments for Summer 2005 through Latin American Lutheran Mission.

Cut-Out Mail-In Form

Address Change - Addition - Removal for Clarion mailing list

Do you need to change your address, add someone or remove yourself from our mailing list? If so, please cut out this form and return it in the enclosed addressed envelope or to the address listed on page 2. Be sure to also check the appropriate box below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip code: _____

- Address Change (New address listed above)
 Address Addition (For Clarion mailing list)
 Address Removal (For Clarion mailing list)



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c/o Faith & Fellowship Press
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED