



“No Place for Them”

“She (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

No Sunday School Christmas program would be complete without the scene of Mary and Joseph sitting stiffly or kneeling beside a homemade “manger” holding a doll representing the baby Jesus. Nowadays we might even entrust our young “Mary” to hold a real baby! There is always a place for them in our telling of the Christmas story.

But, of course, that story is about Jesus, God’s Son, coming into a world that, in spite of the awesome love of God that caused the event, really had no place for Jesus. While Jesus had his followers, even they had little idea about why Jesus was on the earth. In the end, the religious leaders’ lack of room for Jesus brought about his crucifixion. Only God’s love and power could make something positive out of the cold and sinful hearts of human beings. Jesus’ coming into the world was motivated by God’s love. So was his death and resurrection, God’s gift for all people to bring us back into a right relationship with God.

The purpose of Latin American Lutheran Mission is to share this amazing love and mercy of God with the people of Mexico. In the process we also end up sharing it with people in our congregations, or maybe some unchurched friend who goes along on a mission trip. We want people who feel like “there is no place for them” in God’s family to know that God loves them with a deep and complete, unconditional love.

I think of the group of people that Rogelio Balvantin ministers to in a very poor area of Saltillo, Mexico. This summer I had an opportunity to visit the small, humble building where the people of Rogelio’s congregation, “The Lamb”, gather for worship, study and mutual encouragement. It is on the bank of a river that carries sewer water, so the smell in the area is not pleasant. The people of the neighborhood struggle with many health

problems; they live on very small incomes. Yet I sensed that through the kind and loving spirit of Rogelio these people were getting the message that “there is a place for them” in God’s eyes. They are important. They are loved.

As you support the work of LALM you are helping to support Rogelio’s work with these disadvantaged people. You are helping to expand the ministry in Mexico as new churches have been built and are being built in places like Saltillo, Nuevo Laredo, Atongo and Rio Bravo. All pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico (ELCM) churches are receiving monthly support from LALM to make sure that they at least have enough food on the table for their families. On behalf of the LALM Board, I want to thank you so much for your faithful support during this past year.

It has come to my attention that some of you may not have received receipts for all your gifts in recent months. Please accept our apologies. Be assured that your gifts are very much appreciated and necessary for the ongoing ministry of LALM. It is the desire of the Board that all gifts should be acknowledged in a timely manner. If, however, you have not received recognition of a gift from this past year, please contact Bob Myller or me (see information on the bottom of page 2 in the *Clarion*) and we will do our best to make sure that all gifts are recognized.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers as we wait on the Lord for guidance with regard to the new Director of the mission. The process is moving along and we are trusting God to raise up new leadership for the Mission in these next few months. We continue to give God thanks for the faithful and very capable work of Gary and Carol, along with Ricardo and the bookstore staff in Laredo. Keep them in your prayers.

—A blessed Christmas to you all.
Pastor Byron Meline, President

Annual Trip — Mexico to Minnesota

On September 10, 2003 the Mexican pastors Carlos DeLeon, Glen Estrada, Juan Cortez and his wife Gabriela along with Ricardo Dominquez and Gary Olson from Laredo, left for their annual trip up Interstate 35 to Minnesota. The trip is made annually to attend the LALM board meeting and annual banquet and to visit churches and share about what is happening in Mexico.



Sharing at South Zumbro Lutheran Church, Kasson, Minnesota; Pastor Mark Schwarz, Ricardo Dominquez, Carol Olson (Sept. 03)

Their first Sunday was spent in a variety of places. Glen Estrada went to St. John in Waseca, Minnesota where he shared at the services, enjoyed a reunion of people who had been to his church in Atongo and he even stayed overnight and shared on Monday in Spanish classes in a local school. Carlos DeLeon and Gary Olson went to Somerset, Wisconsin and shared at Christ Lutheran Church where Pastor David Everett is now

serving. Pastor and Mrs. Cortez traveled to Urbandale, Iowa to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. They stayed through Wednesday night so they could be with the youth, many of whom have visited San Rafael where the Cortez's work. That same Sunday, September 13th, Ricardo Dominquez and Carol Olson visited at South Zumbro Lutheran Church and shared during their adult Sunday school and church service.

During the week, they enjoyed many garage sales, second-hand stores and times of fellowship with friends. One morning



Evening of fellowship at Jerry and Patty Anderson's (Sept. 03)

Continued on page 5

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

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 January 9, 2004.

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

Annual Report for the Association of LALM

2002-2003

V. Gary Olson Director of LALM

Thanks again for your faithful prayer support during this past year. The theme for this year's conference is "Blessings through God's People." Philippians 1:3-5, "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."

LALM history has been focused on prayer and answers to prayer. What can we do today to keep our focus on prayer??? Can we ask congregations to lift up the workers in Mexico? Can we form concerts of prayer throughout the Midwest?? What can your congregation do??

Again as I prepared this report I went through the board reports for this past year. During this period from September 2002–August 2003 we had 42 short-term mission teams with 933 people going into Mexico. These teams were from 62 different churches. This total amount of people does not include those who stopped by the border to visit for a day or so.

Dick & Marvis Dessner came from West Concord, MN January 7-31. Three couples from our CLBI days came January 22-29. Omar & Kathy Olson from Trinity in Minneapolis came January 24–March 26 and again from June 6–August 12. Don Hollingsworth from St Louis, MO came to work on a manual for LALM January 27-29. Phil Anderson's came Ruthon, MN from February 3-19. Dave Copenhaver's & Pete Alexander's came from Indiana from January 27–February 7. Harold Anderson from South Dakota came to help from February 5–March 5. Anne Carison from Jamestown, NY came again and stayed from January 30–March 5. Esther Hovland from Blue Earth, MN came February 9-23. Dave Leeman & Vic Heiner's came from Trinity Lutheran in Minneapolis to do an audit and work on the computer. During the year we had 34 volunteers. We are thankful for God's gifts to us in the form of his people who are sent by Him.

Thanks for your prayers concerning the Bible School. There are no classes this year. Three students continue to study at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo. These courses are Seminary by Extension from LCMS. Pray for these students.

The Youth Center at San Rafael had five youth teams visit this year. Messiah Lutheran from Indiana came with 20 people from March 8-13. Grace Lutheran from Minnesota came with 20 people from April 10-16. A Ukandu team from Iowa came with 48 people from June 7-14 to help out with the ministry. A Ukandu team from Florida came with 18 people from June 15-21. A Ukandu team came with 24 people from July 13-21. The ministry at San Rafael included two basketball tournaments, medical outreach, painting the building, carport, & VBS.

Gethsemane Lutheran from Minnesota came July 27–August 1 with 27 people and they went to Apodaca. Trinity Lutheran of Minnehaha Falls came with a group of 28 people from August 2-9 to work at Apodaca as well. Both groups worked on the 2nd floor of the pastor's house & VBS.

The church at Rio Bravo had 3 youth teams this year.

Bethel Lutheran from Rochester, MN came with 11 people from February 16-22. They worked on the new building at the mission. Bethel Lutheran from Rochester came back again with 44 people from August 2-10 and worked in Saltillo at the new church and helped with VBS. Lay Ministry Training Center came with 45 people March 2-8 to Rio Bravo. They helped with painting at the church and helped with the kids program at the mission. We are thankful for these partnerships in ministry. Calvary Lutheran from Indiana came with 32 people June 22-29. They helped with VBS & construction at the mission.

Glen Estrada in Atongo at Christ the King Lutheran church had six youth teams this year. Zion Lutheran from Wisconsin came with 10 people from January 26–February 2. St John's Lutheran, Waseca, MN came with 8 people from August 10-19. A Ukandu Team came with 18 people from June 22-28. Another Ukandu team came with 24 people from July 13-21. Roseni Lutheran from South Dakota came with 13 people from July 24-29. Salem Lutheran came with 12 people from July 26–August 1. These groups worked on the new church building and they also helped with VBS and community outreach.

The Texas district, LCMS, sent three Can Do teams to work with Rev. Brigido Villarreal at Our Savior's Lutheran in Guadalupe. One team of 36 people from June 21-29 & another team with 14 people from March 1-8 & another team of 9 from March 8-14.

Texas District, LCMS, through its Can-Do Youth Program sent 7 Sr. High youth teams and four Jr. High youth teams this year. Sr. High teams worked in Saltillo on the construction of the new churches. The teams were March 8-15 with 53 people; June 7-14 with 32 people; June 14-21 with 18 people; June 22-28 with 33 people; July 5-12 with 29 people; July 13-19 with 27 people; July 19-26 with 15 people. The Jr. High Teams came to work at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo on the construction of two new churches. The Teams were here on June 8-13 with 25 people; June 15-21 with 29 people; July 6-12 with 10 people; July 13-20 with 19 people. The Jr. high teams cleared some land for the church in Nuevo Laredo, moved blocks painted, cleaned up the property and they helped with VBS. The last Jr. high group helped in the evening at Faith Lutheran VBS in Laredo.

Trinity Lutheran from Houston, TX came with 14 people January 17-20 and made 21 bunk beds for the new building in Laredo. Christ Lutheran from Arkansas came with 36 people from March 23-28. They painted four of the buildings and made some repairs.

Our Friends from LBIC days (Anderson's; Rosdahl's; Schoeder's) came from January 22-29. They framed windows and put molding in the new building.

Redeemer Lutheran from Austin, TX & Faith Lutheran from Flower Mound, TX came with 32 people from July 20-26 and served in Saltillo. The new church is progressing well. Rev. Marco Rodriguez is building another church in Saltillo. A group

from North Dakota came from January 5-14 with 5 people & they went to Saltillo. Trinity Seniors continued to work on the new building putting in the stairways and kitchen cabinets.

This year again we were blessed by having the seniors from our home church, Trinity Lutheran of M'haha Falls come down in February. Each year I am amazed to see all the work that is done by them. The big project was the new border building. Repairs were made and buildings were cleaned and painted. We had a great time of fellowship and they are an encouragement to us. Thanks be to God for His people.

The ministry of the Gospel Bookstore is celebrating its 36th year anniversary. Elvira Ruiz has taken over the bookstore & is doing a great job. It is hard to find workers. Continue to uphold this ministry in prayer.

At the border we again received many donated items. Brian Smith sent to the border many quilts, school kits, health kits and layettes for the churches in Mexico. Many other groups have sent down quilts and cards for use in ministry in Mexico. Rev. Roger Ose donated several hundred quilts for the ministry. Thank you again for your support of the ministry and your partnership. This past year we were blessed at the Pastor's conferences with the following speakers and teachers:

- January, Rev. Bryon Meline
- May, Rev. Dick Erickson

Rev. Bulmaro Velasquez is President of ELCM. Please uphold him in your prayers. Again this year we will be asking the teams to put more emphasis on ministry in their short-term outreach in Mexico. We will encourage the following:

- Literature Distribution
- Mime, Clowning, Skits
- Bible Distribution
- VBS, Teaching English using the Bible
- Videos, sharing in song and testimonies.
- Community service projects

This coming year we need You!!!! and others to pray for the work in Mexico. Pray for Revival. How many of You!!!! will be there in prayer with us??? Through your prayers God works miracles.

FROM —Global Prayer Digest

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9). “It is finished! In this scene John describes his vision of the final victory, when some from every people group will praise the Lord Jesus. This scene fulfills God's promise in Genesis 12:3 that through Abraham and his descendants all other families of the earth would receive the spiritual blessing that came through Jesus Christ. There are many causes and interests to which we can commit our lives. But the vision of Christ's global cause is one which is sure to succeed. Dear Lord, how we long for the day when people from every nation, tribe, people, and language will bow before you and acknowledge you as Lord.”

Genesis 12:1-3 Called to be a Blessing 89-90

Empowered to be a blessing 90-91

Sharing the blessing 91-92

Living the blessing 92-93

Walking in the blessing 93-94

Praying in the Blessing 94-95

Confidence in the blessing 95-96

Demonstrating the blessing 96-97

Showers of blessing 97-98

Rivers of blessing 98-99 John 4:14

Blessing through Obedience 99-00 Genesis 22:18

Blessing through Faithfulness 00-01 Matthew 25:21

Blessing through servant hood 01-02 Philippians 2:5-11

Blessing through God's People 02-03 Philippians 1:3-5

Interesting data:

1990-2003 — We have had a total of 135 different volunteers.

1990-2003 — We have had a total of 7,555 people come on teams.

1990-2003 — We have had a total of 325 teams.

LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN MISSION Annual Fall Conference and Meeting September 22, 2003

Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls
5212 41st Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55417

“Blessing through God's People” was the theme for the Conference held at Trinity Lutheran Church on Monday, September 22, 2003. Approximately 170 people attended the banquet.

The Conference began with a noon luncheon followed by sharing of experiences of mission trips to Mexico. Pastor Juan Cortez and his wife, Gabriela, from San Rafeal, Pastor Glen Estrada from Christ the King Church in Atongo and Pastor Carlos de Leon from El Sembrador Church in Rio Bravo were in attendance and shared information of the work being done in their respective churches.

The LALM Board met from 8:30 am. to 5:00 p.m. The annual meeting and banquet began at 6:00 p.m.

Pastor Tedd Ostrem from Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls welcomed all present. Pastor Byron Meline offered the opening prayer.

Carol Olson led us in songs after dinner. The offering of \$5,945.70 was received

President Byron Meline called the meeting to order.

MSC The Secretary's report to be approved as presented.

MSC The Treasurer's report to be approved as presented.

Treasurer Bob Myller explained the financial operation of

LALM. Dave Leeman handles the accounts payable and Karen Thompson now handles accounts receivable as Financial Secretary

Gary Olson highlighted the Director's written report. Forty-two short-term teams (933 people) went to Mexico during the period of January – August 2003. These teams were from 62 different churches. We were reminded to continue to pray for the workers in Mexico.

Carol Olson thanked Kathy and Omar Olson and Ricardo Dominquez for their diligent work at the border.

The following people were elected to three-year terms to the LALM board: Dr. Herb Nygren, Rev. Terrance Stratton, Doris Toddie and John Sirjord. President Meline also recognized the present board.

Pastor Linda Helberg shared activities of Bethel Lutheran Church in Rochester, MN. Over 150 different people have taken part in the eleven mission trips to Mexico. They go with a deep desire to share God's love in Mexico through service among their brothers and sisters in Christ. They feel the people of Bethel have grown in faith through the powerful witness of the Mexican people, by their warmth and joy, lively and enthusiastic worship, knowledge of scripture and deep understanding and practice of the Christian faith. The Bethel congregation whole-heartedly supports these mission trips and feels richly blessed by the privilege.

Our Mexican guests offered special music. Pastor Juan Cortez and Pastor Glen Estrada reported on the work going on in their respective areas.

Pastor Carlos de Leon brought the message.

Dedication of the new Hobart/Pfluger Hall will be Sunday, February 15, 2004.

Please pray for God's direction and guidance in hiring a new director.

We are reminded of the LALM web site:

www.lalm-elcm.org.

MSC To adjourn the meeting.

The board met briefly with the following officers elected for 2003-2004:

President – Rev. Byron Meline

1st Vice President – Rev. Terrance Stratton

2nd Vice President – Dr Herb Nygren

Secretary – Rose Marie Anderson

Respectfully submitted,

Doris Toddie
Secretary

Continued from page 2

they spent at Lay Ministry Training Center sharing and singing during the chapel hour. LMTC comes yearly to Mexico for a mission outreach. A special blessing for Gary and Carol Olson was seeing Don and Vi Fladland from Washington state but teaching for one month at LMTC. Don had been their youth director (a few years ago!) and very instrumental in their Christian walk.



Sharing at LMTC; Ben Sollio, Dave Jare, Ricardo Dominquez, Gary Olson, Carlos DeLeon and Glen Estrada (Sept. 03)

Sunday September 21 again found the pastors in different places. Carlos DeLeon visited Bethel Lutheran Church of Rochester, Minnesota, sharing three services and on Monday morning had a meeting with the bishop of the Southeastern area of Minnesota. Glen Estrada visited Frederic, Wisconsin



LMTC; Fladlands and Olsons (Sept. 03)

and Pastor Ernie Swenson. Pastor Swenson had taken a group to Atongo this year and they enjoyed a reunion that day. Juan Cortez spent Sunday in Cedar Falls, Iowa at Nazareth Lutheran Church. Gabriela Cortez and Carol Olson visited Grace Lutheran Church in Mora, Minnesota, sharing at the adult forum and services. Ricardo and Gary attended Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls in the morning and Ricardo spent the afternoon at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Maplewood with the youth group who had been in Mexico this past summer.

Sunday night was spent decorating for the banquet and preparing for Monday's all-day board meeting, afternoon sharing time and the evening program.

Early Wednesday morning, the 24th, everyone was ready for the twenty-four hour drive back to Laredo.

Thank you for the invitation to your churches. We are sorry that we can't make it to every church that invites us but we'll keep trying.



Leaving for Laredo; Pastors and Gary Olson (Sept. 24, 03)

September 22, 2003 – A Full Day

The Board of LALM gathers around 8:30 a.m. After some time of sharing, work begins. When the pastors make the trip to Minnesota, they always have time to share what is happening in their particular area.



Board meeting (Sept. 22, 03)

Lunch is always served by woman from Trinity, the host church, and this year there were around fifty in attendance. Time was taken to get a picture of the board and our Mexican fellow workers.

While the board continues in the afternoon, there is a sharing session taking place, attended by twenty to thirty friends of the mission. The pastors share about their families and work and, of course, they share in music which is enjoyed



The Board of LALM, with four pastors from Mexico (Sept. 22, 03)

by all! People who have been in Laredo and Mexico share about their experiences and it is a special time for all.

At the same time, people are cooking and preparing the evening banquet meal. This year, Ricardo and Gabriela offered to do the cooking. They, along with help from Juan, made four hundred tortillas. Other people helped in a variety of ways but

the end result was a typical Mexican meal served in a very artistic way. Mexican rice, refried beans, chicken, tortillas, salad and, of course, hot sauce, if you wanted it.



Gabriela Cortez and Ricardo Dominquez making tortillas for LALM banquet (Sept. 03)

There was even hot, *hot* sauce, if hot sauce wasn't hot enough.

The church was decorated in green, white and red, colors of the Mexican flag, having just celebrated Mexican Independence Day the week before. There were around one hundred and seventy people present. A good time of sharing, singing, and preaching followed.



Ricardo Dominquez cooking for LALM banquet (Sept. 22, 03)



LALM banquet at Trinity of Minnehaha Falls (Sept. 22, 03)



Singing praises at the LALM banquet (Sept. 03)

During the day many things appeared on the lawn of Trinity to be picked up by Brain Smith of Waterloo, Iowa in the afternoon and to be brought to Laredo later in the fall. These things are sent into Mexico little by little as opportunities arise.

Thanks to all who helped with any part of the day and to all who gave things to be sent to Mexico. You are all a great blessing to the mission!



Donations of bikes (Sept. 03)



Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in September through October of 2003. 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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 Fertile Lutheran Church ~ Fertile, IA
 Fertile Lutheran ELCA Women ~ Fertile, IA
 First Lutheran WELCA ~ Audubon, MN
 Franklin Lutheran Brotherhood ~ Viroqua, WI
 Gospel Bookstore ~ Laredo, TX
 Hennes Lutheran Church ~ Minneota, MN
 Highwater WELCA ~ Lambertson MN
 Immanuel Lutheran Church ~ Estherville IA
 Lake Madison Lutheran Church ~ Madison, SD
 Our Savior's Lutheran WELCA ~ Amery, WI
 Pontoppidan Lutheran Church ~ Fargo, ND
 South Zumbro Lutheran Church ~ Kasson MN
 Twin City Filter Service ~ Minneapolis, MN
 Zion Lutheran Church ~ Bone Lake, Frederic WI
 Zion Women of Life ~ Frederic, WI

Estates:

Haugen, Harriet

Application for LALM Director Candidates Are on Website

The LALM Board is now seeking candidates who feel that God may be calling them to serve as the next Director of the Latin American Lutheran Mission. A basic job description and application form is available on the LALM website, www.lalm-elcm.org. Interested persons should fill out the application form and mail it, along with a resume to: Latin

American Lutheran Mission, PO Box 49758, Minneapolis, MN 55449-0758. The call committee plans to begin interviewing candidates this fall. Again, please remember to pray for God's guidance and direction for future leadership of the Mission.

—Rev. Byron Meline

Please Note:

We have a new PO Box address for contributions. It is located at the bottom of page 2 as usual and following. Change your address book contact information as applicable.

New Address:
Latin American Lutheran Mission
PO Box 17385
Minneapolis, MN 55417-7385

LALM Prayer Warriors December 2003

We need your prayers. Keep on praying for this ministry. It is only through your prayers that His work is accomplished. Opportunities for new ministry are opening up for the church in Mexico but they need your prayers. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer." 1 Peter 3:12.

Items for Praise:

Richard Dominquez for his help at the border.
 For safe travel during the annual meeting time.
 Radio Ministry of Rev. Carlos de Leon
 New opportunities for ministry in Torreon
 Volunteer help
 Trailer load of items for ministry
 Ministry of Gospel bookstore

Please continue to uphold:

Process in finding a new director
 Good health & safety for the Olsons
 Winter volunteers
 Rev. Bulmaro Velasquez as he leads the ELCM
 Pastor's conference in January - Rev. Dick Erickson
 Unity within ELCM
 Wisdom for Gary as he works with the ELCM pastors
 Rev. Howard Haugen's ministry at Bethel Lutheran
 Funds for pastoral support
 Revival in Mexico
 Wisdom for the President of Mexico
 Continued healing for V. Gary Olson
 New ministry opportunities in Mexico
 Funds for medical coverage for the pastors in Mexico
 New vision for the ELCM pastors
 Summer youth teams that they might see Jesus in a new way
 Message of Christmas might make an impact on our hearts
 Funds for ELCM pastor's kids for studies

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 to the new address listed on page 2 and to the left in the gray box. 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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