



# Latin American Lutheran Mission CLARION

Vol. 69, No. 6

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

December 2004

## A Thank You from Gary & Carol Olson



Gary and I would like to say a sincere thanks to the LALM family. You have supported us in many ways by your prayers, your financial gifts, your words and deeds of encouragement during these fourteen years and also by coming and lending a hand at the border and in Mexico. We feel so blessed to have met so many people, from so many places in the United States and internationally, and so many churches that have used their talents. They have come with servant hearts to serve Jesus and help the churches and people of Mexico. We thank the Lord for bringing us to this ministry and for His faithfulness during these fourteen years. We have many, many wonderful memories!

In the early years, Gary would travel twice a year with the late Pastor Ecamnacion Estrada, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. He got to know the pastors, their families and their churches. Then as groups started coming those first years, one of us would go with each group, and I was blessed to get to know the pastors, their wives and children. What an inspiration the Mexican brethren have been to us! They love the Lord, they love the Word, they love to preach and teach and share in their communities.

As the ministry of small groups going into Mexico grew,

many volunteers came to help and we want to say thanks to each one. About eight thousand people have come through Laredo and traveled into Mexico to work with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. Much physical labor was accomplished – building, painting, cleaning, mixing cement by hand etc. In some communities they also worked at schools, health centers and the Red Cross. That left a great witness in the communities. We encouraged every group to come prepared to do some type of ministry. Many groups came prepared to do VBS, some had puppets and some came with mime and drama groups. They made a difference in the churches and communities where they worked but they, too, received a blessing. Many testified that the week in Mexico changed their lives. Our sincere thanks to each one!

In the winter we enjoyed the visits of many seniors. So many things were accomplished as they came to experience “A Vacation with a Purpose” – and to get away from the cold. They have left their mark all over the border station in Laredo. And our trips into Mexico were a great encouragement to the pastors and their families. I’m sure for many of the seniors that trip was the highlight of their time at LALM. The fellowship we enjoyed together was something very special! Again, our sincere thanks to each one!

It has been a privilege to work with the board of LALM. We looked forward to being together at our meetings twice a year. Thanks you for your support and encouragement. A big thanks!

We leave with grateful hearts. First, to our Lord who led us to LALM and for His guidance and strength and grace these 14 years. These past few years have been at times difficult for Gary, struggling with Parkinson’s, and other health problems. Secondly, we are thankful for all of you and your prayers. Please continue to pray for us as we adjust to a very different lifestyle. And, we thank the Lord for bringing Dick and Barb Erickson to the directorship of LALM. We feel they are God’s appointed for the years ahead. Pray for them! Give thanks for them! And encourage them as you have been a great encouragement to us.

Philippians 1:3 “We thank our God every time we remember you. In all our prayers for all of you, we always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel.”

# A Work in Progress

Building a church is a window on the reality of God's activity in building our lives. This is a photo of Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. El Calvario has been building a new church on the property of the old one. The efforts and sacrifices of the members together with the generous volunteer labor and financial help of short term teams have brought us this far. After the old building was taken down the congregation began to meet in the building used by the Hobarts for the school for the blind. Now after five years, they are using the first floor of the new building provisionally. The walls of the upper floors for education space and parsonage are being completed as we speak. The ceiling over the worship area is made "american style" of plywood and 2x10s so without a roof there has been some weather impact on these materials. The projected cost is about \$14,000 to complete Calvary's roof. These kind of challenges drive us to our knees, which is where we always need to be, depending on the Lord our Provider. Sometimes we need to be praying for the faith to pray the big prayers that defy our small faith, big prayers to our big God.

Thanks to all the teams that have worked on and given generously to the El Calvario project in Nuevo Laredo, and to the others mentioned in this newsletter.

**Calvary Lutheran  
in Nuevo Laredo**



"No other foundation can anyone lay than the one that is already laid, which is Christ Jesus..." (1 Corinthians 3:11).  
"Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it." (Psalm 127:1).



**Interior of  
Calvary Lutheran**

## 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 7, 2005.

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

# The “Getting to Know You” Trip – # 1

With the intense summer schedule and the annual meeting behind us we have been carving out time to visit the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico on their turf. It’s one thing to meet them as a group in the teaching situation of a quarterly pastors’ conference but quite another to get to know their unique personalities, their precious families, and the particular challenges of their congregational assignments. Recently we piled into the mission’s red pick-up to visit the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.

We started in Via Mainero, a small town nestled in a valley



**Pastor Ulyses & Rocio Lopez**

about three hours south of Monterrey; one travels through some knock-your-eyes-out mountain scenery to get there. River Jordan Lutheran in Via Mainero is among the oldest of the ELCM churches. This old adobe church and parsonage, until a few years ago, had roofs made of palm fronds, but now has corrugated metal sheets. Both of these buildings are in sore need of repair and the parsonage needs cupboards and a sink. Pastor Ulyses and Rocio Lopez and their three lively children, Ruben, Elda and

Abraham have been pastoring the flock there for two years. Recently they have been working with another group in a nearby town that wants to get into the Word and is asking for the Lopez’ leadership.

Just to the north is Linares, a regional crossroads where

Pastor David and Maria de los Angeles Aguillon and their three children Maria Isabel, David Eduardo and Ruben are in charge of starting a mission, Mount Horeb Lutheran.



**Pastor David & Maria Aguillon & family**

They have had to rent and, with cost increases, have moved two times. This has made it difficult to build a congregation because they have been using their rented home for a chapel as well as living quarters. They need furniture for their congregation to sit on; at present people stand for the entire worship service. Maria de los Angeles has been quite ill lately and needed to be hospitalized though she is thankfully feeling better now with medication. Maria was raised in Via Mainero so she is familiar with life in this area of Mexico.

The work in Via Santiago is currently led by Pastor Glenn Estrada and his wife Chely. Glenn is a member of the directorate of the ELCM. The Estradas longer term assignment has

been Christ the King Lutheran in nearby Atongo which dedicated their new church building this summer. The Estradas have been temporarily shepherding in Via Santiago with leaders from Christ the King because their previous pastor Cruz Herrera’s health no longer permitted him to do so. The Estradas also have three lovely children Jonathan, Viviana, and Glenn Jr. who is in college.

There are three ministries in Monterrey, overseen by Pastor Brigido and Raquel Villarreal whose residence is the parsonage at Our Savior’s Lutheran, a struggling congregation. Raquel is related to the Huertas whose name is associated with the beginnings of the church of Mexico. The Villarreals have five married children, Raquel, Rosisela, Brigido Jr., Julio Cesar, and Bertha Alicia and nine grandchildren. Another church, Gethsemane Lutheran, is located in an area of town unfortunately known

for its drug traffic but evangelist Saul Uriostegui, with Pastor Villarreal’s encouragement, has taken up the challenge of bringing the Gospel to that neighborhood. Saul is unmarried and was himself converted from that lifestyle while doing time in prison. A new work has recently been begun in one of the outlying areas of Monterrey that will combine planting a church with a community center providing services to that growing and needy area.



**Pastor Brigido & Raquel Villarreal**

Lastly we visited Pastor Samuel and Agueda Diaz and family at Bethany Lutheran in the town of Apodaca on the northern edge of Monterrey. Samuel and Agueda have three children, Samuel, Christina, and Sarai. Pastor Diaz is a tentmaking pastor, that is, he has a day job working for the telephone company as well as serving as pastor of Bethany Lutheran. The Diaz’ were married at Bethany under a previous pastor and then were discipled into leadership. They are very happy with the unity that exists in their church and with the efforts their current members are making to reach out to friends, neighbors and extended family.

Each congregation has a unique set of variables and challenges in their immediate context but winning people to the Lord through relational evangelism and nurturing the church in the Word of God and the life of prayer and worship remains a constant for pastors. Barb was impressed with the spiritual vitality of the pastors’ spouses and in her chats with them took note of the kinds of needs that moms and homemakers in Mexico have. I invite you to add these precious couples’ names to your prayer list and pray for the power, peace, protection, and prosperity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be abundantly poured upon them, within them, and through them.

# Crossfire — A More Effective Way of Doing Short Term Missions

Did you know that one of the most powerful trends affecting the missionary endeavor in the world today is the tremendous increase in the numbers of people in short term service? Pastor Steve Hughey, a member of our LALM board and Director of Mission Partnerships in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, challenged us to think about how this trend affects our own short term ministry involvements which have increased steadily over the course of the last fifteen years.

As the new director of LALM, I sustained some thought provoking telephone conversations with Pastor Hughey earlier this summer and invited him to help our LALM board to do some brain storming about trends currently affecting missions and especially to open a conversation about ways to make short term mission service more effective both for the Mexican churches receiving the teams and the team members themselves. Then in October Pastor Hughey convened a pilot project which brought together a group of key people from many regions of the LCMS work in the USA. They met here at the LALM border station, visited El Calvario in Nuevo Laredo, then traveled into Mexico to experience one of our congregations in its local context and talk to our pastors about challenges and opportunities for ministry. The new way of doing short term mission that Pastor Hughey is envisioning is called “Crossfire” and would improve team preparation before leaving home, create more strategic ways for teams to partner with churches overseas,



Crossfire group posing under tree and in session



and give team leaders ways of channeling the enthusiasm that short termers bring home from their experiences in another culture. It was a very stimulating and profitable time of fellowship with some dynamic local leaders who are making a huge difference in God’s mission mobilizing as the grass roots. I hope and pray that I will see many of them in Mexico in the near future.



Pastor Juan and Gaby Cortez and family, hosts of our group

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## The Trailer Arrives!

Brian Smith from Waterloo, Iowa and his “Servant Unique” ministry have for many years brought a large trailer of donated items from the Upper Midwest to the Border Station in Laredo. Many people bring items to the LALM annual meeting in September and Brian’s volunteers load them into the trailer. Others leave boxes of donated school and health kits, and layettes at Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls for Brian to bring down. Summer Vacation Bible Schools often collect materials. Quilters from many churches bring their handwork. It’s a joy to unpack this trailer every fall as it arrives in Laredo to bless the church of Mexico with an early Christmas. This year our early Christmas arrived October 28th! And it’s very timely, because as the weather turns colder up north, it also does in Mexico, especially at higher elevations where the quilts are deeply appreciated because homes do not have the heating systems we have “up

north.” Thanks Brian. This year Gary and Jared Weibrand were the drivers. Thanks guys. Every item represents the love of God’s people in a practical way.

### Special Note:

Our e-mail address is:  
[lalmelcm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lalmelcm@sbcglobal.net)

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The PO Box address for contributions is:  
**Latin American Lutheran Mission**  
**PO Box 17385**  
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# Confraternidad October 2004

It was characteristically hot in Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, Mexico as the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico converged on Rio Bravo from all over northeastern Mexico for their quarterly conference. Three times a year they gather for inspiration, additional training, and to do the business of the church. The Director of the Latin American Lutheran Mission is responsible to obtain a speaker for these important meetings. As I prayed about it, it seemed that the emphasis this



time should be on spiritual refreshment and revival through worship. Following a suggestion, we scheduled Pastor Ramon Delgadillo from Monterrey, Mexico, well known for his ability to teach on worship and praise. Thursday was focused on the worship and praise theme led by Pr. Delgadillo and Friday was for various items of business for the church of Mexico. The evening meetings were open for the public and our guest speaker preached Thursday evening, while I was given the privilege of bringing the message on Friday evening. The teaching was very practical that Pr. Delgadillo brought, peppered with good humor and many anecdotes from his pastoral experiences were wonderful, and the worship experiences were wonderfully participative, liberating and Spirit filled. On Thursday during worship, the Lord spoke a liberating personal

word to me. I had been feeling increasingly overwhelmed by the financial challenges of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico as well



as the other challenges in my leadership role in the mission and its relationship with the church in Mexico. I had begun to feel very small and inadequate. As I stood before the Lord and prayed forth my heart's cry on these matters there came the sense that I should not take upon myself what only the Lord Jesus as Lord of His Church must take upon himself.



That the government of the Church was upon His shoulder and not mine. At the same time came the sense that God had brought us to this point, had prepared us for this season of ministry and that He was going to make use of all He had taught us. Then came a powerful image of a set of keys. As I reviewed the scriptures later about the power of the keys in Revelation, Matthew and John a wonderful sense of hope and empowerment invaded my soul as I realized that nothing is as big as Jesus. And He has called us to have our eyes filled with His glory, live in His Name, exercise His authority and discover His adequacy. It's wonderful what comes out of worship.

—Pastor Dick Erickson

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## MILESTONES

### Dedication of Nazareth Lutheran in Matehuala



On November 16, 2004 Nazareth Lutheran in Matehuala, Mexico dedicated their new church building. Their Pastor, Rev. Hilario Castro gave an open invitation to the special service to

all the pastors present at our October Confraternidad Conference. Nazareth Lutheran thanks all the teams who have contributed work and materials to their new church building.

### Fifty Years

We congratulate Pastor Hilario Castro who completes fifty years of ministry with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico in 2005. His current assignment is Nazareth Lutheran in Matehuala where he has served the last six years. If you were at the annual meeting you will remember his good humored testimony about the early days in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.



*Continued on page 6*

# Testimonies from the ELCM Bible Institute – “Inspiration”

## Efrain Contreras

I want to give thanks to God for his love and mercy toward me to the present. As the scripture says in Jeremiah 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” And in Psalm 91:14 and 16, “Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows my name. With love I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.” A long time ago they told me about the love of God. I remember when I walked the wide road of rebellion and disobeyed both God’s law and my own conscience that people told me that Jesus loved me, but my stupidity and hardness of heart were ruining my life day after day. The Lord began to touch my life, I became sick but I still thought I could solve these problems by my own strength. I just wasn’t getting it. One day I lost a finger at work but even that didn’t bring me to my knees. I began to understand that I was living in sin, but I didn’t want to turn away from it. Then my kidneys began to malfunction and this was more than I could handle. When I realized I might die I remembered someone had told me that God could heal so I told my wife, “Talk to your brother-in-law, he’s a man who obeys God. I want him to come and talk to me about God. I want to give my life to Jesus Christ.” So my brother-in-law Jacob came and he explained to me the way of salvation. That’s how I began to walk with Jesus in April of 2001. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Because of my kidney trouble I had to start kidney dialysis which I did for two years. I never thought that one day the Lord would touch the heart of my own older brother, who wasn’t even a believer in Jesus, to donate one of his kidneys to me so that I might live. Now I understand that God loves sinners as he says in John 3:16. Nineteen months

have gone by since the transplant surgery and I know I serve a wonderful God and I want to live for his honor and glory. May it all go to Him. For ever and ever. Now my purpose in life is to take the Gospel to every creature and tell them that God heals and forgives sin.

—Efrain Contreras

Efrain is 33 years old and married to Lucinda.

They have two children, Cynthia and Lester.

## Casildo Arizmendi Urioste

I want to thank you all for your help and for all you are doing for me. I was born in a Christian home but I didn’t really know about repentance and the new birth. I was living in the mountains of Puerto de la Vela a little ways from Tecpan de Galeana in the State of Guerrero, Mexico. My parents put me in grade school there and occasionally we went to church. I started to smoke and drink with the guys, I had one foot in the church and the other in worldly pleasures. I was wasting my life, with no real purpose, but one day some kids invited me to a youth conference though I really didn’t want to go. But finally I did go and from the very first message the Lord broke my pride. I wept before the Lord like I had never cried before. The Lord brought me back into the church. I want to thank God for having protected me from falling into the drug culture and that he has shown me that he has a purpose for my life. I have come to the Bible Institute to seek the Lord more deeply and to try to develop the gifts he has given me that I might not just be an ordinary vanilla Christian but one who truly blesses others.

—Casildo Arizmendi Urioste – Age 21

Born 3/13/83 in the state of Guerrero, Mexico.

Casildo has two brothers and two sisters.

*Continued from page 5*

## A Milestone for Good Samaritan Lutheran

As of October 15, 2004 the roof was completed and the extensive wood scaffolding taken down at The Good Samaritan Lutheran Church built in an outlying area of Saltillo where there were only fields a



few years ago. With the nave now open Pastor Mucio Reyes is planning a special musical event with the “Estudiantina” chorus from Ebenezer Lutheran for a kick off service. The Reyes are developing the congregation they hope will soon fill this, the most spacious of the churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. The students of the Bible Institute are canvassing the neighborhoods around Good Samaritan doing evangelism and inviting people to worship.

## Twenty-Six Years

We congratulate Pastor and Mrs. Bulmaro Velasquez and the congregation of Ebenezer Lutheran in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico for celebrating the 26th Anniversary of its dedication on June 27, 2004. It’s been a difficult year for them with Petra recovering from injuries due to a fall and Pastor Bulmaro from surgery.

## Philadelphia Using Their New Church

As of October 15, 2004 the first floor ceiling was poured at Philadelphia Lutheran in another suburb of Saltillo. This encloses the worship space so that the congregation can use it. Later they will complete the fellowship hall and parsonage on the second floor. Pastor Marco Antonio Rodriguez has a storage room with stacks of new plastic chairs and he assured me they will be brought out one by one but only for new members!



Praise the Lord for his vision for outreach!



# Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in September through October of 2004. 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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Valtinson, Rev Joe and Betty ~ Fridley, MN  
Vik, H Allen and Janice ~ Decorah, IA  
Westre, Myron and Pauline ~ Hardy, IA  
Wilkowski, Donald and G ~ Valley Glen, CA  
Wing, Edward and Barbara ~ Mendota  
Heights, MN  
Winnes, Martha ~ Minneapolis, MN  
Winther, Lois ~ Park River, ND  
Wise, Patricia ~ Manor, TX  
Witt, William and Beverly ~ Hudson, WI

## Memorials

In memory of Clarence Aaland  
In memory of Elsie Chell  
In memory of Lenore Evenson  
In memory of Howard Haugen  
In memory of Mrytle Nordin Huerta  
In Loving Memory of Brian Johnson  
In memory of Donald Strand

## Honorariums

In Honor of Verda Akland's Birthday  
In Honor of Gary and Carol Olson's Ministry

## Churches & Organizations

The Gospel Bookstore ~ Laredo, TX  
Fertile Lutheran Church ~ Fertile, IA  
Hope Lutheran Church ~ San Antonio, TX  
Lake Madison Lutheran Church ~ Madison, SD  
Minneola Lutheran Church ~ Goodhue, MN  
Platteville Lutheran Church ~ Minooka, IL  
Pontoppidan Lutheran Church ~ Fargo, ND  
South Zumbro Lutheran Church ~ Kasson, MN  
Zion Lutheran Church of Bone Lake ~  
Frederic, WI  
Women of Our Savior ELCA ~ Amery, WI  
Twin City Filter Company ~ Minneapolis, MN  
North Heights Lutheran Church ~ Roseville, MN  
West Prairie WELCA ~ West Fargo, ND  
Zion Women of Life ~ Frederic, WI  
Estate of Ruth Harrington ~ Sioux Falls, SD

# LALM

## Prayer Warriors

### December 2004

**Thanks and Praise**

- For Brian Smith and servants Gary and Jared Weibrand, who delivered a large trailer full of donated items to bless the church of Mexico, from many churches and individuals in the Upper Midwest.
- For the time of spiritual refreshing at the trimestral pastors' conference, "Confraternidad," in October.
- For the visit of key leaders from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod as part of a new short term mission program they are developing in association with LALM.
- For the individuals, couples, and church groups who have already made reservations to help us on the border during January through March.
- For the advocate God raised up to help us save on our electrical service.
- For our faithful and dynamic workers on the border: Pr. Ricardo Dominguez at Bethel Lutheran and in the Gospel Bookstore: Elvira, Carmen, and Jesse.
- For my opportunity to teach at the Bible Institute in Saltillo in October & November and to preach at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo for the "The Week of the Christian Man."
- For the impressions of faithful service and vital spirituality of pastors and their families left from trips to some of the churches of the ELCM in October and November.
- For the improvement in Gary Olson's overall health this fall.
- For insights and inspiration gained at the Fellowship of Short Term Mission Leaders conference in October.

**Prayer Requests**

- For funds to purchase bibles for the ELCM.
- For Rogelio Balbantin and the six students currently involved in the Bible Institute in Saltillo.
- For the spiritual preparation of all leaders of the ELCM and for the Holy Spirit's direction in the choosing of new leadership at the January pastor's conference.
- For the needs of pastors and their families in Mexico: needs such as cupboards, sinks, plumbing, roof repair, and weatherproofing outer walls of parsonages.
- For the need of an electric guitar and amplifier, & cymbals with stands for a drum set for worship leaders in Mexico.
- For the churches which are now making decisions and plans about summer teams.
- For LALM board member Doris Toddy's husband, Al's recovery from an aneurism.
- For Maria de los Angeles, Pr. David Aguillon's wife, recovery from a condition incurred in childhood which has caused severe pain and recurring infections for which she needed hospitalization this fall.
- For the urgent financial need of Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo for funds to put the roof on their new church. (See photo) Approximate cost: \$14,000.
- For the finances required to continue the remodeling of Norma Hobart's home donated to the mission.
- For safety in travel and on site for all of our volunteers who help us on the border this winter.
- For faith to pray for the large amounts of money required to meet the mission's commitments & complete projects in Mexico.
- For funds for the education of pastors' children and for their continuing theological education.

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