

## Do the Work of an Evangelist

A very common occurrence in Mexico is to be flagged down on the highway. Sometimes people are selling something, needing help or just asking for a ride. Few people own cars so they rely on buses but especially in the country the infrequency of buses obligates people who need a ride to flag down any vehicle that has room for a passenger. I remember on one of our trips in the mission's pick up there was a group of men waving down passing vehicles late one afternoon, migrant farm hands. When we stopped not one but six jumped in the box to go as far as we could take them. It was quite a load of happy campers. Presently there was a tap on the roof and it was time to let them off. It reminded me of the story of Pastor and Mrs. Geronimo Salazar. Pastor Salazar was on his way from Saltillo to the little town of Huachichil where he and his wife are the pastors of "God With Us" Lutheran Church. Their little chapel seats twenty-five people. They came upon some men waving a shirt. Stopping to see what was the trouble, the men were asking for a ride into Huachichil. That moment it occurred to Geronimo to do so if they promised to come to church that evening. The men agreed. Geronimo wondered if they would actually come or were just saying that to please him. Nevertheless, that evening there were four newcomers in the worship service. Pastor Geronimo changed the direction of his message to speak more evangelistically to these newcomers. It was a message from Genesis 1-3 about paradise lost and how Jesus came so that we might regain paradise. He could sense the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance. At the end of the service three out of the four gave their hearts to Jesus. Pastor Salazar wondered if their decision would be a permanent one or merely emotional, but the succeeding weeks proved their sincerity as they were regular for worship and Bible Study. After some weeks the harvest time was over and they returned to their homes several hours to the South. But as they left they exchanged phone numbers and invited the Salazars to come to their town to share the Gospel. For nearly a month efforts to call and set up a meeting met with no success, but then they connected. As Geronimo and Dora Elia made their way in their old van to the mountain village the roads got narrower and narrower as the mountains grew higher and higher. Soon there was no way to turn around. They stopped to ask a lady they passed



how far it was to the village they sought. "It's just up the road a ways. I'm going there, too. I'll take you there if you have room for me in your van." They chatted about the spiritual reason for their visit as they inched along the mountain roads. Upon arriving their passenger promptly went all around town inviting everyone to the special service. A call went out to the men who had come to know the Savior through the Salazars and soon a good crowd was in attendance. Again the Gospel message went forth and several other adult men gave their hearts to Jesus. There were tears of repentance and joy. I asked Geronimo what he thought the Lord was telling the church of Mexico through these experiences. His reply, "I think the Lord is telling us to stretch out to new areas of Mexico."



Geronimo and Dora Elia Salazar

# Would you call it a miracle?

“Come now, let us reason together says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall become like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18). Winter in the Upper Mid-West has always been a visual aid for understanding this verse where snow, ice, sub-zero temperatures and ever present “wind-child” are the rule and not the exception in December. We have noticed with a chuckle this year’s unseasonably warm and dry Fall and early Winter in the Midwest. Then something truly unique happened. On Christmas Eve it began to snow in Laredo! The local weathermen said it would not accumulate, but it did. A little over an inch. The roof tops, lawns, and car tops were all white. Everyone was out at the crack of dawn on Christmas Day taking pictures. With the snow came the cold, three consecutive nights below 32 degrees. The warnings went out that oranges and grapefruit might be damaged, so we were out in the falling snow picking as many as we could December 24 before dark. That was a first, harvesting citrus on Christmas Eve. And it was a bumper crop. You’ve heard of Sunkist oranges? We had Snow kissed oranges! There were bags of glorious orange and pink tinged yellow on every counter and table and floor



space. In the year-end “ Big Moments of 2004”, local television ranked the White Christmas number one, for there had never been a white Christmas in Laredo and the last time it snowed here, with any accumulation, was in 1973 – 31 years! In church they called it a miracle!



## 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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Our *NEW* web site: [www.lalm-elcm.org](http://www.lalm-elcm.org)

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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 Norma Hobart House

Among the heroes of the Latin American Lutheran Mission are Norma and Claire Hobart missionary pioneers who came to Laredo in the early years of the mission's existence. Much of the land now associated with the Latin American Lutheran Mission border station was originally obtained through the vision and generosity of the Hobarts. Claire, an alumnus of Gustavus Adolphus College, a gifted blind Gospel musician honored with various awards from his alma mater, traveled the country playing, singing and sharing the Gospel, representing both the LALM and their ministry to the sightless in Mexico. After years of teaching the blind to read in Nuevo Laredo, Claire and then Norma were called home to their rest in the Lord, but their earthly home, the original dwelling on the mission property in Laredo continues to be one of our guest facilities. But it has been in need of significant remodeling and updating. The LALM board gave approval for this project at its September meeting. Shortly before Christmas



ground was cleared, new foundations were dug, and plumbing installations were laid out in preparation for the arrival of our Winter volunteers who will invest their creativity and find great fellowship and joy in giving a new shape to the Norma Hobart House. Let's keep in prayer both the safety of those who volunteer their skills in this remodeling as well as the funds required to complete it. Maybe you'll be on the border someday and stay in Norma's house.



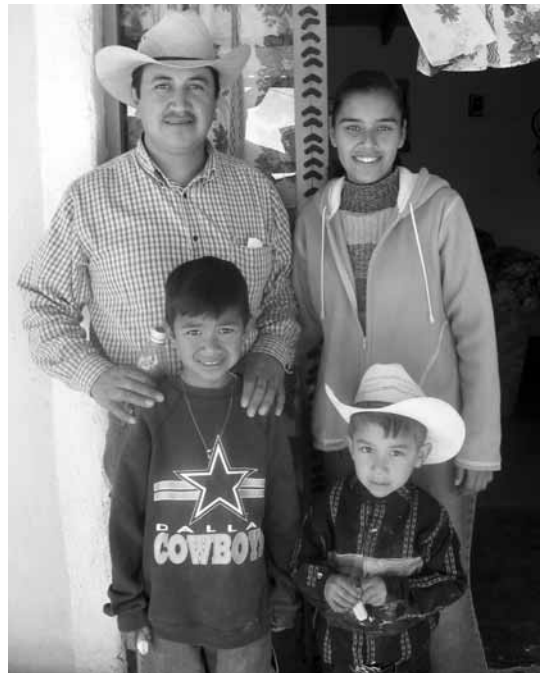
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## Getting to Know You Trip # 2

Our second trip to get acquainted with the needs and emerging challenges of the pastors and churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico had us visiting many of the churches in Matehuala-Salttillo corridor.

Pastor Homero and Julia Cortez serve "Upper Room" Lutheran. It's name is especially appropriate because it is high in the mountains in La Boca del Refugio an area that has produced many pastors of the ELCM.

On our recent visit we were touched by their Christmas story. Pastor Cortez lives in a rural mountainous area of Mexico where his people do not have much to put in the collection plate. In the light of this reality the Cortez and some friends have formed a small furniture making business in their town to supplement their income. They have obtained a small loan from the government for purchasing power equipment for their work and a shop in which to work. We asked if they had had any special services or activities for



Christmas. We noted that the church had been freshly painted and we concluded that they had wanted things to really look nice for Christmas visitors. Pastor Homero and Julia we were enthusiastic about how things had gone. Their people had worked hard to develop a special program with children portraying the manger scene and the other key people who play a role in the first Christmas, but in addition was a drama about the second coming of Christ. Everyone had been inviting neighbors and friends so there were a hundred people in attendance. The church was filled with the excitement of "opening night". The dramas were powerful and many people were touched deeply about their own readiness to meet the Lord, among them a husband and wife who had come with their children and who

opened their personal lives and their family to the presence of Jesus. What a Christmas gift to the church in La Boca, an entire family trusting Jesus.

# Connecting Resources and Needs

By Barb Erickson

We received a letter from a church this past fall that went like this: "I'm writing for the Children's Ministries Committee at (our church) to ask a question. This year we would like to ask if there is something specific that LALM is doing for children in the local Mexican churches connected with LALM. It's good for the kids here to have a connection with the place where their offerings will go, so we look for something that will help children their age...."

Perhaps in your church you are asking the same question. "What can our Sunday School children do to help the children in Mexico.?"

Our response is through the Christian Literature Fund of LALM. In the fall Dick Erickson, Ricardo Domingues and I went to visit each of the churches and pastoral families of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico.

We asked them what needs they had. Many of them responded that they had no Sunday School materials. One pastor's daughter told me they were finishing some material they had but were about to start all over again with the same material for lack of new lessons.

With surplus from our Gospel Bookstore we responded to this need. Now in the month of February we will need to buy materials for the next six months. With our literature fund empty, we thought perhaps your Sunday school would like to respond in our Sunday School Sponsorship program.

This is how the 3S (Sunday School Sponsorship) program would work: We have about 24 Sunday schools that need materials. For a dollar and fifty cents, one child can receive Sunday School materials for three months. This material is bright, colorful, and Scripture based and written in Spanish. There are visual helps for the teacher at \$6.00, as well as the teacher guide at \$2.70, each for six months. If your Sunday School class or department would like to help one church of between 20-45 children, with Sunday School materials once or twice a year and/or VBS materials once a year, we can assign one church to your group and that would

be your mission connection for the year. You may renew the relationship each year if you wish. We would keep you informed of the progress with pictures and other information as it arises. There may be other needs as well. We are hoping each church can be supplied with an education supply cabinet. Extra supplies will be needed for this cabinet as well.

The churches have other needs as well. For instance, communion sets, offering plates, altar cross and linens. Also from the literature fund, evangelistic tracts could be provided for the churches. Tract racks are needed for each church. Many churches in the United States have provided the ELCM with school kits and health kits as well as many quilts and blankets. This continues to be an ongoing need. There is a need for towels and washcloths, sheets and pillowcases. For more information write or call us for a brochure on kits, or the specific needs for any given church.

As you can see there is a great need for helping the Lutheran church in Mexico. We all have ways in which we can respond to this need. Are any of these ways in which you can help?

## 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  
Minneapolis, MN 55417-7385

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## Ambulance Ministry Saves Lives

Pastor Juan and Gabriela Cortez serve "The Christian Youth Center" church of San Rafael. Due to the cost of ambulance service in this semi-rural area, the Cortez prayed for and finally obtained an ambulance donated through the good graces of Christians in the U.S. The difficulty with this service, they discover, is that people who need it do not or cannot pay for even the minimal costs of a volunteer ambulance service. Example: \$40 for gas for a two way trip to Saltillo. If even one patient out of three paid for gas....but nearly every week a family shows up needing the ambulance. Recently when visiting the Cortez, we found the ambulance gas tank empty and three flat tires, two tires had blown out with a patient en route to the hospital in Saltillo. Without significant help from any community funding, nor from the local church, the Cortez often foot the bill for



maintaining this vehicle out of their meager resources. They try to operate it as a faith mission but sometimes it means their family goes without. This stretches them to the max. We helped them buy

the tires to get the ambulance road worthy. This ministry needs some partners.

# Update on the ELCM Bible Institute “Inspiration” and Testimony of Pascual Estrella Lucas

January 11, 2005 the second semester of studies at the “Inspiration” Bible Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico began in the city of Saltillo, Coahuila, a new semester with new subjects and new opportunities to grow in the Lord. The students were returning from their homes and families where they had been for the Holidays in order to continue their preparations for ministry. Let’s continue to pray for Pastor Rogerlio and Gloria Balbantin as directors of the Bible Institute.

It’s a big job that entails being surrogate parents to these students, preparing meals and organizing the chores and activities of this house of studies, as well as the administration of the program of the Bible Institute. Let’s remember the students in our prayers: Jessica,



The Bible Institute director and his family.

Cazildo, Efrain, Jorge, and Pascual whose testimony we include with this update.

My name is Pascual Estrella Lucas. I am 22 years of age, born April 2, 1982 in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, one of four brothers and four sisters born to my parents, Thomas Estrella and Catarina Hernandez Lucas. Ours was a Christian home and my parents took me to church. I was seventeen when I surrendered my life to Jesus as my Savior. It was March of 1998. But, as time went on I moved to the big city of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon to find work and that’s where I began to wander away from the things of God. One day I met a guy named Saul (Saul is an assistant pastor at Getsemani Lutheran in Monterrey). I soon discovered he was a committed Christian. Through his influence I was encouraged to return to the Lord and follow him which I have done up to the present. Even in the midst of the problems and struggles I try to go forward in my faith and am counting on the strength that the Lord gives to follow Him. That’s the long and short of it. May the grace of God be with each of you. My purpose for being in the Bible Institute is to better prepare myself to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Thank you for your prayers for me and for the Bible Institute.

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## “The Lord of the Past, Present & Future” – Report of the 2004 Annual Meeting

Report of the September 20, 2004 annual meeting of the Latin American Lutheran Mission held at Trinity Lutheran Church of Minneahaha Falls, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Prepared by Rose Marie Anderson, Secretary

“Lord of the Past...Lord of the Future” was the theme for the annual LALM conference held on Monday, September 20, 2004. Hosted at Trinity Lutheran Church of Minneahaha Falls, we express our gratitude for the Pastor, Staff, and people for the gracious way in which the Conference was accommodated.

The conference began at noon with a luncheon followed by friends of the mission gathering and sharing experiences of mission trips during the past year. Th Mexican delegation included Pastor and Mrs. Juan Cortez, Pastor and Mrs. Glenn Estrada and son, Pastor Ricardo Dominguez and Pastor Hilario Castro (who had attended the Bible Institute in 1955).

The LALM Board met from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The annual meeting and banquet began at 6:00 p.m. Approximately 200 guests were in attendance for the banquet. Host Pastor Tedd Ostrem welcomed all present and President Rev. Byron Meline offered the opening prayer followed by dinner. An offering of \$5,472.00 was received.

### Lord of the Past

Following the dinner, the Mexican delegation and Pastor Juan Fernandez, from St. Paul, sang several songs. Joyce



Feeding the 5000

Anderson from South Dakota sang the song “Ring the Bells” which was written by Claire Hobart. Carol Olson gave the history of Claire and Norma Hobart’s life of service to the School for the Blind which covered a span of 43 years.

A very interesting video honoring the life of Pastor Howard Haugen was shown. Howard the son of long time LALM director, Sanford Haugen, had been the pastor of Bethel Lutheran at the LALM’s border station. He passed away in January, 2004 in Laredo, Texas. President Meline also gave recognition to past board members that were in attendance. One of the highlights of the evening was the honoring of Gary and Carol Olson upon their retirement

from the directorship of the mission from 1990-2004. The Mission has grown and touched the lives of thousands of people, both of those who have served on short term teams, and those who have been the recipients of their service. Olsons moved August 1<sup>st</sup> to a new home in Lockhart, Texas. The Mexican pastors sang a song which was written especially for the Olsons.



Refreshing the Saints

## Lord of the Future

Music was presented by Pastor Glen Estrada and family. "Envisioning the Future" was shared by Pastors Gleen Estrada and Juan Cortez. Pastor Dick Erickson closed with sharing his thoughts on "The Future is created twice: once in our hearts as we pray and a second time as we take action to make dreams a reality".



LALM board meets with ELCM pastors

## Lord of Today

Rev. Dick and Barb Erickson were installed as the new Directors of the Latin American Lutheran Mission. The Ericksons arrived in Laredo in June and worked with the Olsons until August for a time of transition which was reported to have gone smoothly.

- MSC The Director's report be approved as presented
- MSC The Secretary's report be approved as presented
- MSC The Treasurer's report be approved as presented.

MSC The Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for the following board members to be elected for a three year term: Bob Myller, Marjorie Erickson, Pastor Dan Sollie and Carol Olson.

Closing remarks and benediction was given by Pastor Meline following by group singing.

MSC to adjour the meeting.

The board met briefly with the following officers elected for 2004-2005 :

- President - Rev. Byron Meline
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President - Dr. Herb Nygren
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President - Rev. Terry Stratton
- Secretary - Rose Marie Anderson

Respectfully submitted,  
Rose Marie Anderson  
Secretary

## New Leaders Elected to 3 Year Terms

At the January quarterly meeting of the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico, held at Ebenezer Lutheran in Saltillo, Mexico, a new president and his cabinet



were elected. We honored the long tenured outgoing president, Bulmaro Velasquez even as we installed the newly elected directorate: President - Rev. Carlos de Leon, pastor of El Sembrador in Rio Bravo; Vice President - Pr. Geronimo Salazar, co-pastor of Dios Con Nosotros in Huachichil; Treasurer - Pr. Brigido Villarreal, pastor El Salvador in Monterrey; Secretary - Pr. Antonio Tirado, pastor El Calvario of Nuevo Laredo, two at-large members were also elected, Pr. Samuel Diaz of Betania in Apodaca and Pr. Hilario Castro of Nazaret Lutheran in Matehuala. The assembled pastors sent their warmest greetings and sincere thanks to all the LALM supporters "up North" and to the many teams who have blessed the Lutheran Church of Mexico with their love and fellowship in many projects during 2004. The directorate of the newly formed women's movement was also elected from among the pastors' wives : President Maria Elena de Tirado, Vice President Ana de De Leon, Treasurer Esperanza de Reyes, and Secretary Gabriela de Cortez.



# Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in November through December 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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Winther, Lois ~ Park River, ND  
Wise, Patricia ~ Manor, TX

## Memorials, in memory of:

Stanley Akland  
Isabel Anderson  
Herbert Carlson  
Arland Christianson  
Lenore Evenson  
Howard Haugen  
Charles Holst  
Laurence Hovland  
Edythe Nordin  
Donald Strand  
Al Toddie  
Elsie Vandredde  
Verda Akland  
David Lovick  
Vern Peterson

## Honorariums:

Gary and Carol Olson

## Organizations:

The Gospel Bookstore ~ Laredo, TX  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church ~ Beresford, SD  
Faith Lutheran Church ~ Williston, ND  
Lake Madison Lutheran Church ~ Madison, SD  
Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls ~ Minneapolis, MN  
Our Savior's-Ten Mile Lake ~ Dalton, MN  
Platteville Lutheran Church ~ Minooka, IL  
Pontoppidan Lutheran Church ~ Fargo, ND  
South Zumbro Luth Church ~ Kasson, MN  
St Paul's Lutheran Church ~ Amherst, WI  
Ruth Circle Franklin Church ~ Viroqua, WI  
Salem Women of ELCA ~ Hitterdal, MN  
Fertile Lutheran ~ Fertile, IA  
Franklin Lutheran Brotherhood ~ Viroqua, WI  
Holmes Ev Lutheran Church ~ Clarion, IA  
Immanuel Ev Lutheran Church ~ Estherville, IA  
North Heights Lutheran Church ~ Roseville, MN  
Zion Lutheran WMF ~ Dexter, MN  
Christ Lutheran WELCA ~ Hendricks, MN  
Franklin WELCA ~ Viroqua, WI  
Little Bethany Church WELCA ~ Hawley, MN  
Singsaas WELCA ~ Astoria, SD  
South Zumbro WELCA ~ Kasson, MN  
Trinity WELCA of Kiester ~ Kiester, MN  
First Lutheran Women of Life ~ Parshall, ND  
Old Westbrook Women of the ELCA ~ Lamberton, MN

**LALM**  
**Prayer Warriors**  
 February 2005

*"Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Ephesians 5:20*

*Thanksgiving*

1. For good things happening in the churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico.
2. For the faithful ministry of the pastors of the ELCM.
3. For the financial generosity of individuals and congregations that supported LALM in 2004.
4. For the improved health of Gary Olson, LALM's previous director.
5. For the fellowship, creativity and giftedness of our Gospel Bookstore staff: Elvira, Carmen and Jesse and for Rev. Ricardo Dominguez, pastor of Bethel Lutheran and LALM's border associate.
6. For the grace of God experienced in these times of leadership transition.
7. For the visits of encouraging supporters here on the border.
8. For the encouragement of men and women of God in Mexico.
9. For the visions of church growth springing up in leaders' hearts.
10. For the fellowship of many who come to the border to help during these Winter months.
11. For quilts, kits, clothes, supplies, Bibles, toys, and much more that Christians channel through LALM into Mexico.

*Petitions for 2005*

*"You have not because you do not ask." James 4:3*

1. For continued financial provisions for the remodeling of the Norma Hobart House.
2. For empowerment and wisdom for the new officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico elected the end of January.
3. For the safety of the volunteers who work at the border station in January and February.
4. For journey mercies and blessing on the eight teams that work with the churches of the ELCM in February and March.
5. For financial provisions to complete the roof of Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo.
6. For Doris Toddie, LALM board member, whose husband Al passed away recently.
7. For special grace to be upon the five students of the Bible Institute and upon their various teachers as they begin this second semester of studies.
8. For wisdom for two fact-finding missions to be undertaken this Spring to plant churches in new areas of Mexico.
9. For the power of the Holy Spirit to work mightily in the Holy Week youth congress.
10. That a climate of joy prevail amidst the challenges and demands.
11. Give us, O Lord, a vision that requires your supernatural provision.

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