

Latin American Lutheran Mission CLARION

Vol. 71, No. 1

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

February 2006

Investing in the Future:

Rising to the Challenge of Educating Pastors’ Children

Working with the pastors’ families of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico brings to mind the issues Barb and I faced at that stage of our family’s development. We were completing our second term in Ecuador, South America and our four children were entering their adolescent years. As responsible parents we were looking into options for the education that would best prepare them for their future, both academically and socially.



Pastor Mucio and Esperanza Reyes and their three children: Xiomara, Itzel Merari, and Jaaziel Isai. Xiomara, their oldest, is studying music in Saltillo.

In Mexico there is a series of additional variables that inform these challenges. 1. In Mexico children only receive free education funded by their government through the eighth grade. Even so, the quality of education can be significantly lower in out of the way places. 2. In most rural areas, the options for school beyond eighth grade are limited, with few specialties beyond those focused on agriculture and agri-business. This means that parents with gifted children or desirous that their youth have the best chance to succeed in more technical careers, have to send them away to regional centers that offer more options for education. I remem-

ber remarking during a visit to one of our rural pastors why there were so few youth visible on the street. The answer: most had been farmed out to relatives in Saltillo to complete high school. Some come home for the weekend to return to classes Monday. All of this implies expense for travel, inscriptions and tuition, books and labs, room and board, etc.

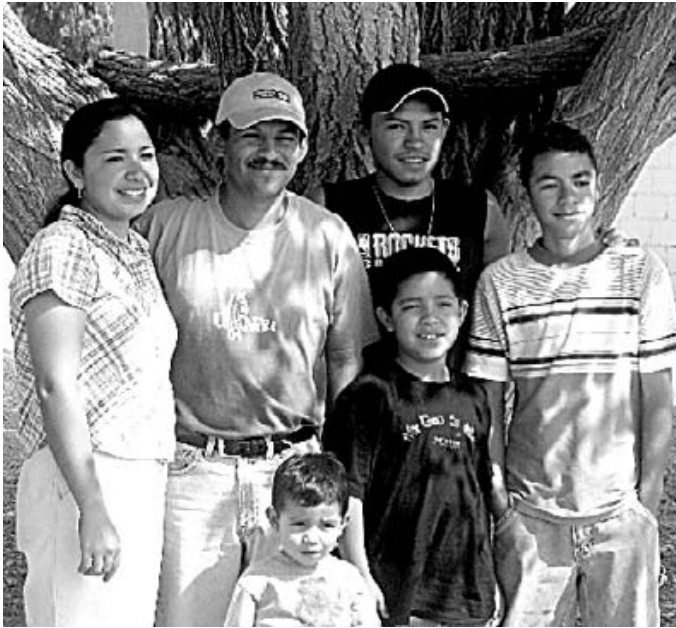
Each of our pastors understands that the responsibility for their kids’ education is between them and the Lord. But the very modest monthly subsistence allowance that the pastors receive from the Latin American Lutheran Mission barely puts food on the table much less provide for high school and college. So we made a covenant: to pray for the financial resources needed on a monthly basis for pastors’ families with youth in high school. We include some of their photos in this article and invite you

continued on the following page



Pastor Ulises and Rocio Lopez and their three children: Ruben, Elda and Abram. Their congregation is in Villa Mainero. Ruben attends high school in a larger city, Linares, and commutes by bus in the morning and evening.

to seek the Lord with us for the blessing of these families with needed financial resources for these educational challenges. Thanks to those of you who already have risen to this challenge.



Pastor Juan and Gabriela Cortez and their four children: Gabriel, Isai, Daniel and Nathanael. Gabriel and Isai are both in high school in Saltillo.



Above: Pastor Glenn Estrada and Araceli and their children, Jonathan, Vivi, and Glenn Jr. Glenn Jr. attends the university, Vivi is in senior high school and Jonathan in elementary school in Monterrey.



Left: Arheli de Leon, the youngest child of Pastor Juan de Leon of Torreon attends a vocational-technical school in that city.

Latin American Lutheran Mission

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Latin American Lutheran Mission Clarion

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The Gospel Bookstore of the Latin American Lutheran Mission in Laredo



Elvira Ruiz, bookstore manager



Rosy Montemayor

2006 celebrates the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Gospel Bookstore as part of the ministry of the LALM. For many years it was the only source of Gospel literature, Bibles and Evangelical materials in Laredo, but over the years other similar stores have opened in both Nuevo Laredo and Laredo. Though not in a commercial location, its faithful ministry and service to the Evangelical Churches in the border area has developed faithful and satisfied clients.

Our Employees — Part of the reason the Gospel Bookstore has prospered is because of the friendly and creative employees God has blessed us with over the years. At present Elvira Ruiz is our acting manager. We have had some turnover of employees this year. At present God has provided two new part time staffers: Rosy Montemayor and Susy Arroyo. Susy had been an employee in our Bookstore on a previous occasion. Pray for these three Godly women that their presence among us will truly be a ministry to those who frequent our bookstore.

Full Service — The Gospel Bookstore provides a more full service ministry to Sunday Schools and has also been a chief source of VBS materials, hymnals and Bibles in quantity for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. The bookstore has seen a marked increase in the sale of Christian music. CD and DVD technology is making the cassette tape and VHS videos obsolete. We'd like to challenge our friends who have partnered in the bookstore ministry to help us expand our VHS video library to include the increasingly popular DVD Christian films. Another challenge we face is to update and upgrade our bookstore interior and its signage. This fortieth anniversary is a great time to not only celebrate the past but recommission the Bookstore to an even more strategic and relevant ministry into the future.



Susy Arroyo

The Year of the Pews

We are so blessed to be on the receiving end of donations. Over the years we have received many loving expressions of mission commitment: recycled Christmas cards with Spanish Bible verses on them, boxes with personal hygiene or school kits, donated clothing and household articles like sheets and dishes, computer equipment, portable sewing machines, serviceable furniture, vehicles, building materials, rugs, portable air conditioners, and much much more. At times people come to Laredo with pickup and even trailer loads of donations they hope will have a “twice but nice” second life in Mexico. But 2005 became the “Year of the Pews.”

It started out when a Sunday morning visitor to Faith Lutheran, the only English speaking Lutheran Church in Laredo, stood up during announcements to say that he had a semi-trailer full of pews donated by a church in Wisconsin that had assumed could be brought free into Mexico because they had been given and transported for free to the border. Customs would not allow him to take them into Mexico, and the church in Guanajuato, Mexico that was the original destination would not pay to have them transported to their location, so he was stuck with them and he needed to give them away or junk them. Pastor Antonio Tirado at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo was happy to take them off his hands and transport them a few at a time until they filled the new sanctuary at Calvary. One of our short term groups began the process of refinishing them.

One of the congregations that has had service groups twice yearly in the churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico is Bethel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota. Recently they completed the construction of their own new worship center in Rochester. They decided to donate the seventy solid oak pews that were in their old worship center for use in Mexico. Bethel has been helping to complete Filadelfia Lutheran and Good Samaritan Lutheran churches in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico for over five years and could envision their pews serving a new generation in Mexico. They disassembled them and a volunteer drove them to the border. However, getting them down to Saltillo proved to be much more complicated and expensive than we thought. The customs and government red tape proved there’s “many a slip between cup and lip” and there was a long delay, and storage costs began to add up.

In the meantime, Bethany Lutheran of Austin, Texas was selling its old church property. Groups from Bethany were instrumental in the construction of Youth Center, parsonage, and school for challenged children in San Rafael where Pastor Juan and Gabriela Cortez serve. Bethany has carried the mission and the church of Mexico on its heart. When Bethany was making decisions about what to do with over two hundred and fifty padded and stackable chairs, over one hundred metal folding chairs, nursery equipment, white and green boards for classrooms, and much more, they called about donating it to us. So, several trailer loads later it was in storage here in Laredo, waiting to go across the border with the pews from Bethel of Rochester.

Then the phone rang from Faith Lutheran in Laredo with the news that they had obtained new pews from a church



Pastor Mucio Reyes stands by the disassembled pews after their arrival in Mexico. At present they are being reassembled in Good Samaritan Lutheran and Filadelfia Lutheran Churches in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico.

that was shutting its doors and wanted to donate their old pews for use in Mexico. The interesting part of this story is that these 20 padded pews were originally constructed by Sanford Haugen the long time previous director of the LALM!

In November, after concluding that the customs broker could not accomplish the deed, Pastor Ricardo Dominguez, our mission associate, took on the personal challenge of trouble shooting and breaking the log jam. We turned him loose to find out what was holding things up whether here on the border or in Mexico, and to see things through to their conclusion, which he did with characteristic enthusiasm. The disassembled pews are being assembled in Filadelfia and Good Samaritan Lutheran Churches in Saltillo. Faith Lutheran’s pews are now in San Rafael. Other pews adorn the sanctuary in Matehuala. The padded stackable chairs are being distributed among the churches in Mexico and are also in use here at Bethel Lutheran at the border station and in Hobart Hall, our dormitory for short term groups. This has been the Year of the Pew. Whew!

New Ideas for Outreach

Love Basket Outreach



Pastor Samuel and Agueda Diaz of Nazareth Lutheran in Apodaca, Nuevo Leon with their children, Sarahi, Sammy Jr., and Cristina.

Agueda Diaz, Pastor's wife at Bethany in Apodaca, came up with the idea of packing up baskets of good food, necessary household items and other special treats to bless those who visit the church or to present to families that church members know to be needy. They call them 'Canastas de Amor' - Baskets of Love (I'm sure that more than food goes into these baskets, aren't you?)

Short Term Outreach Skill Building Workshop

Service vs Ministry Teams

Someone has made a distinction between short term "service" teams and "ministry/mission" teams. What's the difference? In their thinking the service teams just come to do physical labor type involvements, while the "ministry/mission" teams come equipped to share the Gospel and touch lives. Though this distinction may seem just semantic it is our desire to build teams' capacity to bring the love of Jesus to those they plan to reach. Some teams come well prepared with ministry skills such as puppetry, clowning and mime. They have prepared testimonies and songs to share their faith. There are many ways to do this.

Helping Teams Prepare

The LALM is offering a special workshop in these ministry skills. **First of all**, we are looking for a few good instructors in tools such as mime, clowning and puppetry. Can you help or refer us to resource people in those areas? **Secondly**, we are looking for resources to exchange. Have you used something in Spanish that we could pass on to someone else, and through them to the church of Mexico? **Thirdly**, we would like to hear from you if you would like to attend this "Skill Building Workshop" held on **Saturday, September 23, 2006** (the weekend before the LALM annual association meeting at Trinity Lutheran of Minnehaha Falls). Expert presenters will provide workshops on how to use

these and other tools for ministry. If you would like to receive more information about this workshop write us at LALM, 3519 Salinas Ave., Laredo, Texas 78041 or call for more information at 956-722-4047.

Sunday School Outreach



The parents and kids at Upper Room Lutheran in La Boca celebrate the gift of a television from Lands Lutheran in Zumbrota, Minnesota. This unit comes equipped with built in DVD and VHS players for the use of their Sunday School and its outreach in their area. La Boca is a Sunday School program that has made remarkable improvements this year.

A Family Remembrance of Myrtle Nordin, founder of the LALM.



“My memories of Myrtle are so many but I recall three that stand out for me. The first was when I was in my early teens and we visited her in Mexico. She took us to a remote village that was not easily accessible. The poverty was so extreme. She went from one hut to another administering comfort and whatever else she could. All the time, she spoke to them of the love of Jesus. One man was very ill with a high fever and lying on a mat on the dirt

floor. She knelt and wiped his brow and held his hand so gently. As I watched her, I thought of how Jesus would have done the very same thing.”

The next image is one that took place when Lillian, her sister, and another man and I went to Mexico again. I was just out of high school. She had some meetings and the one I recall the most vividly is where she had a portable pump organ set up. All the Mexican children with their parents would stand around her and sing. I can still see their wonderful dark faces

and lusty voices singing with her. Her skin was so white and her voice so clear and sweet—she looked to me like an angel.

The third image is the one where she came to Minneapolis from Mexico for the last time. She was very ill. Because of traffic problems, I was late in getting to the airport to pick her up. She had found a phone and was trying to call me at my home. She was so happy to see me but because of her sickness, so confused. I immediately called for an electric cart for her. When we came to get her luggage, all she had was a cardboard box tied with twine. I could have wept but then realized that her possessions were not here on earth but she had so many riches stored up in heaven. She stayed at our home for one year but never got well enough to go back and finally ended up in a nursing home. She never lost her love for the people of Mexico and many times would tell me how lonely she was for all of them. She waited and waited for someone to come from Mexico to see her. She had so many trials here but how great her homecoming must have been. I will rejoice to see her again one day.

Ardith Christensen, the author of these recollections, was a niece of Myrtle Nordin who was raised from 6 weeks to age 14 in the Nordin home after Ardith's mother's untimely death.

Extension Classes Growing

How do you train people for ministry when it is impossible for them to uproot themselves from their families and other commitments to go away to Bible College or Seminary? Answer: You bring the training to them. That is what Pr. Rogelio Balvantin and his colleagues concluded. To date they have started extension classes in two centers: Twelve students at Calvary Lutheran in Nuevo Laredo and 10 students at Good Samaritan Lutheran in Saltillo (notice the photos included with this article). Pr. Balvantin has brought a car load of teachers from Saltillo and joined forces with Prs. Antonio and Maria Elena Tirado to do an all day Saturday exten-

sion opportunity in Nuevo Laredo twice a month. The Tirados (both of whom are lawyers as well as pastors) in turn, have travelled to Saltillo to teach the classes offered there. The first round of classes feature: Computer Basics, Introduction to the New Testament, Homiletics, and Evangelism. Already a request has come in to open another center with six students at Christ the King Lutheran in Atongo. Let's pray for the Spirit to confirm His gifts and callings in each of those who are studying by extension and for Pastor Balvantin, the director, and his volunteer faculty.



The current group of leaders taking extension classes in Saltillo, Mexico.



Pastors and presenters teaching extension classes in Saltillo.



Gifts of Love



The following persons and organizations provided gifts, donations, or bequests to the Latin American Lutheran Mission in November and December 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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This is the huge flag of Mexico that flies in the park of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Because of its size it is visible for miles. It is a reminder to pray for the twenty churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico and for the safety and empowerment of the groups that come to bear witness to Jesus on the border and all over Mexico.

Apostolic Risk

The apostolic calling is not only personal but corporate. Reading John Piper’s book “Don’t Waste Your Life” was a reminder that Christians must be willing to take appropriate risks to fulfill their callings. Impassioned by his experience of the Resurrected Christ and Christ’s calling upon his life, Paul moved relentlessly through the Mediterranean establishing churches, often against great opposition. The list of sufferings he details in 2 Corinthians 11 is witness to his following in Christ’s sufferings and marvelous victories. The willingness to accept risk as a part of fulfilling one’s calling is an apostolic fact that rebukes our American obsession with security and comfort. As Keith Green says in one of his powerful songs, “Jesus rose from the dead, and you, you can’t even get out of bed.”

LALM – Prayer Warriors February 2006

“...in everything by **prayer** and **supplication**, with **thanksgiving**, let your **requests** be made known to God...” *Philippians 4: 6*

Prayers of Thanksgiving

1. For the dedication and creativity of staff:
Pr. Ricardo Dominguez, Fred and Wanda Garcia.
2. For Elvira Ruiz, our bookstore manager and our two new employees Rosy Montemayor and Susy Arroyo.
3. For safe travel over the holidays for us all.
4. For the safe passage through customs of a large cargo of donated pews and padded chairs now being distributed and assembled in our churches in Mexico. And for the financial donations that made it possible.
5. For the faithful support of individuals and churches of this ministry.

Supplication & Requests

1. For fruit to come out of the calls and visits made in Arizona and Texas for the mission and the Lutheran Church of Mexico.
2. For Godly blessing on efforts to write grants for projects and needs in Mexico.
3. For the quarterly Mexican pastors’ conference January 25-27 in Saltillo.
4. For refreshment and new horizons at the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies conference in St. Louis January 19-21, 2006
5. For God’s protection and blessing on the nine short term groups who will help us here at the border and among the churches of Mexico through April 10.
6. For a powerful move of God through the Youth Congress of the ELCM during Holy Week, April 12-15.
7. For the health of former director Gary Olson.

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