

Where *He* Leads...

FOREIGN MISSION NEWSLETTER

of the APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

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Teaching the Truth

"My ancestors came to me in a dream and told me to go to another church—a church where they could dance with me. A church that raised me up. That's why I must leave your church."

This unfortunate testimony came from a man in one of the United Lutheran churches in South Africa. Many "churches" in South Africa fuse ancient ancestor worship with Christianity. It was one of these churches that he had decided to attend. Many people, even within the United Lutheran church, do not know that the Bible does not agree with ancestor worship. Unfortunately, they do not understand what the Bible teaches on many topics. Much of people's knowledge seems to come from television, cultural beliefs, or urban legends instead of from the Bible. This is why it is so important to have accurate biblical teaching for all members of every congregation in South Africa!

One of the ways I help people learn more about Jesus is by donating

Bible storybooks and picture Bibles to each congregation. Unfortunately, many of the books seem to disappear from one year to the next, but I pray that somewhere people are still reading them and through them they learn more about God...and in the meantime, I will continue to bring more books!

I love watching the children when I bring out these books. They are especially fun to watch right after I've told them a story. They get so excited about seeing the story in pictures! I sat with one group of kids for almost an hour as they flipped through one of my picture Bibles. First they wanted to see the page with the story I had told them: Jesus calming the storm. Then they realized each page was a different story, so they flipped through the book to see the different illustrations. On each page, they'd run their hands over the glossy paper and comment on different aspects

of the pictures. Then they would turn to me with eager faces and ask, "What is this story about?"

The youth sometimes like to pretend the whole idea of picture books is above them, but, given the chance, they enjoy the books too. On another day I was teaching a mixed group of children and youth. When I finished the lesson about Jonah, I showed the kids the picture of the story in the picture Bible. As usual, they were thrilled. The youth, though, mostly sat back and chatted. However, as soon as the children finally tired of looking through the book, several of the teenage girls sauntered over and were soon absorbed in the stories and pictures.

I have met with many groups of adults, youth and children here in South Africa and I always encourage them to offer discussion topics or ask questions.



Children poring over the Bible storybooks.



From the Foreign Mission Administrator Desk

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The Days in which we live!

It is common in Christian circles to comment and detest the day we live in as being so very evil, dark, and corrupt. While this is most certainly true, let us rather as believers focus in on the fact that "This is the Day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

One of the things that this era has brought to us is the Internet. Your Foreign Mission is using the Internet to spread the everlasting Word of God throughout the world! For example, just in September 2011, people from the following 53 countries accessed our website and blog pages.

Argentina	Denmark	Indonesia	Malaysia	Romania	Thailand
Australia	Ethiopia	Ireland	Moldova	Russia	Turkey
Belgium	Finland	Israel	Netherlands	Saudi Arabia	Ukraine
Brazil	France	Italy	Nigeria	Singapore	U.A.E.
Canada	Georgia	Japan	Norway	South Africa	U.K.
China	Germany	Kazakhstan	Pakistan	South Korea	U.S.A.
Colombia	Ghana	Kenya	Philippines	Sri Lanka	Vietnam
Cyprus	Hong Kong	Kuwait	Poland	Sweden	Zambia
Czech Rep.	India	Latvia	Qatar	Tanzania	

Our regular Foreign Mission website is www.themissionsite.com. It is an access or focal point and you can reach all the various sites from here. Here is the basic information on the websites and blogs:

<http://www.foreignmissionnewsblog.blogspot.com/> or the **Green button** on the website is called the Latest News Blog. Here updates from the field are given, as well as upcoming trip information and other news!

<http://foreignmission.blogspot.com/> or the **Orange button** on the website is called The Weekly Diner. This is where the articles are often posted that are sent around the world each Tuesday. This is a cost free way to spread the Gospel to the world. Are you led to write? Email if so.

<http://foreignmissionstore.blogspot.com/> or the **Colorful store button** is where you can buy books or CD's and such. Proceeds go to The Foreign Mission. Here is an option for Christmas or Birthday gift shopping!

Also available at themissionsite.com is access to Facebook, email, online donations, as well as other options. If you have suggestions for ways to reach even more people with the Word of God, please email foreignmission@comcast.net.

The questions are always really telling and show the influence of both pop culture and traditional African culture! During Bible studies, I've been asked questions such as "Will the world end in 2012?" "Does Satan carry a pitchfork that he uses to stab people?" "Will all the people in heaven wear white robes and have halos?" "Where do witches get their power?" "Is AIDS a curse from God?" "Will I come back to life as a baby after I die?" and, of course, "Are people who die (like ancestors) still with us; can they talk to us in their dreams?"

I'm always so glad when people feel free to ask their questions and I love being able to turn to the Bible with them for the answers! The more I hear the questions, though, the more I realize the need for people to know the Word of God! I have answered the question about ancestor worship many times, and I know I will continue to be asked about

it. Ancestor worship is so prevalent in this culture! It was really sad to hear that one of the young girls I worked with last year has now left the church and is training to be a *saguna* (witch doctor). Another girl is still a member of the church but every night she prays to God and her little gods (ancestors). "If I don't," she told me, "My gods will curse me." It's hard to hear testimonies like this, but I have to remember that God is still in control and when I begin to despair I can remember that I've also heard testimonies like this: "My aunties want us to come and worship the ancestors with them. But I want to follow the Bible. And I don't think ancestor worship is in the Bible. I won't go. I want to live my life according to what God says!"

Bible storybooks and Bible studies are just two tools that can be used to help people learn more about their God. Another amazing tool is prayer and



Discussing with the youth.

today I ask for your prayers. Please pray for the members of the United Lutheran Church in South Africa! Please pray that each person would come to a deeper knowledge of their Lord and Savior.

— *Leona Matson*

What About Sophie?

The day started out like many others for our South African mission team. We traveled a short distance from the church and headed to a neighborhood clinic. Calvin and Debra joined Joyce and me to minister to the sick. A large waiting room was nearly filled with patients and care workers. As usual, songs of faith in Tswana started our visit. After prayer and a short message, we laid hands on and prayed for all who asked. As we left the clinic, our hearts were filled with joy and love from the people and awed by Christ's compassion toward them.

Someone asked if we could visit a gravely sick person just a few blocks away. Of course we went. Upon entering this shack (tin house), I prepared myself for meeting an elderly person. We were taken through the kitchen into a small living room. On the couch was a little girl that looked to be about 5 years old and possibly weighed 25 pounds. Her body was such a tangle that her arms and legs were woven together like a handle for a reed basket. She resembled a ball and her front teeth protruded at various angles. But she had large, thoughtful eyes and a slight smile on her face.

Something extraordinary happened to me upon seeing her and I fell to my knees beside her. I tried to control my sobbing but could not. I could feel the hands of Calvin and Debra on my shoulders praying that God would give me strength. I kept praying an incomplete prayer – "Dear Lord...dear Lord..."

I was finally able to ask her name, Sophie, and was told her age was 15. She has been suffering from CP (cerebral palsy) since about 6 months old. For a while it seemed like the only two people in that room were Sophie and me...I was holding her bony, skinny hand and stroking her head. All I could say was, "Sophie, Sophie, Sophie." After a while a few other words came: "Jesus loves you, Sophie."

Then Sophie started ministering to me. Her large, expressive brown eyes zeroed right into mine and seemed to tell me, "It's alright, my friend, I'm okay; I feel your love."

There seemed to be a slight movement in her face, a smile. That helped me out. So I prayed for her as earnestly as I have ever prayed in my life, "Dear Lord, Please take care of Sophie. Hold her in your arms. Give her a special place in heaven."

After a while I was able to get off my knees and say good-bye to her. Most likely I will never see Sophie again in this life. But that little girl is a memory I will carry in my heart. She stripped humanity down to bare essentials for me. She was a human being, totally dependent on God's mercy just to stay alive. And that seemed enough for her. And you know, it's enough for me too. Sophie will have a new body soon; I will too. God will take care of us. Jesus died for Sophie and for me. I saw Jesus' face in Sophie, and that brought me to my knees.

In God's Love and Peace,
— *Dan Kernes*

SOUTH AFRICA ALIVE

Prayer changes things in Rietvallei

I have only been in South Africa for one week but I really want to tell you about these first few days. I arrived on September 30, joining Leona Matson in the mission field here. She arrived a week earlier. We both have rooms in the comfortable home of Sikeme and Mary Malefane who are pillars in the church here. Their home is located in a township near Randfontein, a distant suburb of Johannesburg.

This first week the plan was for me to spend each day in another township called Rietvallei, a few miles east of Randfontein. This is a rather new housing development area made up of small, block government-built houses situated very close to one another with high fences or brick walls around them. The main streets are paved but many others are gravel or dirt. About 5,000 people live there.

When we arrived the first morning we met an enthusiastic group of young

teenagers at a rundown swing set in an open lot. They had offered to escort us on a prayer walk around the township, handing out flyers inviting people to come to a Thursday night church service and a meeting of young people on Friday. With us was Bishop Mphahlele and Pastor A. Koyana. The most wonderful part about the young people's group was that all of their Tswana names mean something very special in English. I will not include most of the Tswana names in this account, but each of these English names, which I have capitalized, does represent a very real person.

So off we went with Thabang (HAPPINESS) in the lead. LOVE was right beside him, with SUCCESS following closely on our heels. These three boys are good friends. We were also fortunate to have the boy GIFT with us, for which we were thankful. Two girls, STAR and HOPE, who are very close friends, were happily chatting out in the

lead. As they enthusiastically passed out flyers I thought of the star of Bethlehem and the hope it gave us all! Maybe the most important young man of all with us was REVIVAL. Oh, how we have been praying for a revival in Rietvallei so we were glad that he was such an enthusiastic member of our company.

One of the first young men who met our group along the way was TEST. Oh, yes, couldn't we have expected that? Just when we get started with God's missions in life we often have to face some kind of a trial or test. Our TEST was kindly, however. He just smiled a big South African smile, joined our party, and we continued. Our aim was to visit as many homes as possible during the week and to pray for the people who lived there.

In one home, where we stopped to pray, there were only two teenage boys and one young man home. I didn't catch the name of the first two but the third one was TRUST. TRUST insisted that he was true to his name, but he disappeared as soon as we came to spiritual matters. His brothers, however, were so deeply involved in the message of the Gospel that they both asked if they could hear that all of their sins were forgiven, which I movingly proclaimed in the name and blood of Jesus. We encountered TRUST once more outside as we left the home and he proclaimed with his hand on his heart that he would be at our service Thursday evening. He wasn't. Not that trustworthy I concluded!

I should mention at this juncture that my translator DAVID never left my side this whole week, reminding me how I have so often been comforted and inspired by the legacy of that chosen man of God and Psalm writer.



Our young prayer team and some neighbor kids gathered outside one of the homes. Note the flyers in their hands.

One of the most serious cases we encountered was LAZARUS, lying there on the floor covered with blankets. (The days have been rather cool here so far, since it is only early spring.) This poor man appeared to be on his deathbed so you can just imagine how the Spirit led me in a powerful prayer for him. I could almost hear the Master's voice calling, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Other personalities we encountered on our prayer walk were ABRAHAM and ISAAC. I was looking for JACOB, only to remember that Jacob Seppanen will soon be arriving with the group from America who will join us here on October 19, so those three patriarchs will then be in place.

But JOSEPH was a special case. He was in pain. His newly amputated leg was causing problems. When he heard the Gospel message, however, he cried out for mercy and forgiveness, knowing that though he may never walk again properly on this earth he will be able to walk and dance the streets of heaven. The name and blood of Jesus is so powerful on these prayer rounds. Of course the home of JOSHUA was also an important and memorable stop after that since it was in fact, Joshua, who led the descendents of Joseph into the Promised Land.

Mid-week we were directed to a church organization called the Holiness United Home Care Givers. REUBEN (Joseph's compassionate oldest brother) was in charge. REVELATION, THANKS and PRAYER were three of the ladies assisting him. They bring compassion and hope to about 92 outpatients in the township. How appropriately then that it was the young man, GOOD, who took us out to go on more prayer rounds to TB, HIV-positive and other patients with serious illnesses.

It has indeed been a blessed experience to walk through the township of Rietvallei this week praying for many, many people. This included prayer in the homes of each of our young team members. One early morning we were also invited to the clinic where there were at least 50 people in the wait-

ing room plus the staff. We sang and prayed with them and God led me to speak about Jesus at the Bethesda Pool.

At the Thursday evening service we had a good turnout as well as for the youth gathering on Friday. At the youth gathering, though, we once more faced that frustrating concept of "African time." We wondered if anyone was coming. Then would you believe?! Our qualms vanished when in walked HAPPINESS with LOVE and VICTORY right behind him. We were all set!!

Leona's Gardens



Leona's Garden.

Leona has already been very active in many aspects of the mission here. To relax she has started a garden here outside Malefani's home. Yes, it is gardening time in the Southern Hemisphere and she has been happily digging in the dirt and cultivating seeds for planting - beans, beets, swiss chard and carrots. The South African way of doing things is a bit different but she has acclimated to it.

Leona's real love and inspiration, however, is the garden of children's hearts - preparing the soil, choosing the right seed and planting in a caring way that the children understand, of course laced with fun and games.



Leona sharing a parable-like story of how Jesus gave His life for them. Yes, she is quite a "gardener."

Next week I will be working in the township we are living in called Pellesville, serving together with members of the Bethlehem congregation. After that the group from America is coming - Dan and Joyce Karnes, Calvin and Debbie Matson, Thomas Questad, Jacob Seppanen and Pastor Bob Maki. They will join Leona and me here for three weeks.

Rietvallei and South Africa may sound too far away but why not take your friends and/or neighbors on a prayer walk this week and bring the love and promises of Jesus closer to those who live in your neighborhood!

In God's love and peace,
-Dennis Hilman



Leona's real love and inspiration, the garden of children's hearts.

South Africa

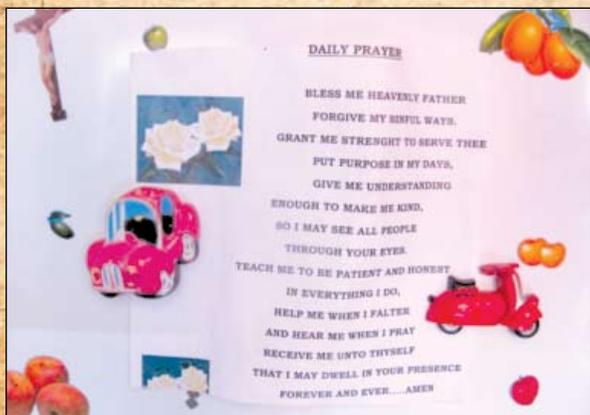
Calvin and Debbie Matson, Dan and Joyce Karnes, Thomas Questad, Jacob Seppanen, and Pastor Bob Maki joined Dennis Hilman and Leona Matson in South Africa for three weeks. The following are excerpts from Calvin and Debbie's travel journals.

From **Calvin's journal**, Saturday, October 22, 2011:

Extremely homesick, mostly missing our children (although I have enjoyed talking about them all and sharing their pictures), and adjusting to the African culture and lifestyle. I found this prayer on the refrigerator door in our shack. Yes, they do have refrigerators, microwaves, and TV's. And, yes it is a shack, made of lightweight barn tin and 2x2's with newspaper jammed in the cracks to keep the wind, bugs and rain out.

Daily Prayer

*Bless me Heavenly Father, forgive my sinful ways.
Grant me strength to serve thee, put purpose in my days.
Give me understanding enough to make me kind,
So I may see all people through your eyes.
Teach me to be patient and honest in everything I do.
Help me see when I falter, and hear me when I pray.
Receive me unto thyself, that I may dwell in your presence
forever and ever. Amen.*



Prayer on the refrigerator.

It's time for bed; just saw a mouse on the table a bit ago (will try to catch him tomorrow). Going to the Chest Hospital tomorrow after a group meeting. Thank you, Lord, for your hedge of protection on our travels and trip thus far. May we continue to thank and trust you as you provide.

From **Debbie's journal**, Sunday, October 23, 2011:

Wow, what a day. Each day has been good, great and amazing at times, but today sure touched our hearts. We went together to a Juvenile Detention Center called Bosasa Youth Center. When we arrived we expected to see boys hanging around outside that we could meet and invite to church. No one was outside. We were taken to the room where church was to be held. Shortly, 14 young men arrived and Bob Maki started preaching. Almost right away you could tell they were hungry for the Word and for forgiveness. Dennis spoke a powerful message as well. It was a privilege to be there as they came for prayer and to hear their sins forgiven. They were so receptive and genuine and begged us to come back. They so want to learn more and be encouraged. May they not be there alone. We pray that God will send people to disciple them. They don't really have anyone who believes in them. A couple of days later we bought these boys Bibles, but they haven't been delivered yet. Dennis and others hope to return to deliver them and share more with the boys as soon as they can. The local Christians don't want to be reaching out to these boys because they are "getting what they deserve." We pray that this attitude will change quickly since they are at a very vulnerable and receptive stage in life.



Bibles bought for boys at detention center.



Calvin and Debbie with their host family.

Mission Training Program

The Foreign Mission has instituted a Mission Training Program, which is an 18-lesson program done via email. The reason for the Program is to help people become better prepared and equipped to face the many cultural and spiritual situations that arise on mission trips.

Since the program's inception in July 2011, 37 people have gone through the course. In many of these lessons, questions are presented to the students, which they are asked to answer in a short form. The following are some of the many answers received, thus far:

Why do you want to go on a mission trip? I would like to go on a mission trip because the Lord has told us many times in His Word to go out into the world and preach the Gospel. Also, I have a desire to tell others about Christ and what He has done for us. Another thing I want to do on the trip is help people in need and in so doing, show God's love.

Knowing God's promise to be in the midst of those gathered in His name, I am assured that on this trip with Him as the focus, His Word will not return void. I know that this trip will force me out of my comfort zone that I often cling to and will force me to rely on Him and have confidence in Him, which will in return strengthen my faith. I thank and praise Him for that, asking for His will to be done.

Why do you want to go on a mission trip? I've wanted to go on a mission trip for a long time – since I was maybe 14. But it wasn't really an active desire since I didn't act on it. However, since mid-summer this year, I felt God using the Holy Spirit to call me to go. My motivation would probably be to grow in Christ and see if God would want me to go on more mission trips or perhaps on a long-term one, and to get out of my comfort zone and be used by God (this is growing in Christ also).

How can we show Jesus to those we come in contact with on this trip? I think the best way that we can show Jesus to others is to show them love. Whether it is through caring for the sick, helping people to meet their basic needs, preventing illness, or just being with them, we can show others God's love. The Bible says that others will know Christians by their love. Love is of God. God is love.

Comment on a fast fact on a lesson: In the lessons, Fast Facts are sometimes presented. A student asked about the fact that the Foreign Mission has not done anything about reaching the people in the Amazon jungles of South America. As the Foreign Mission Administrator, I would answer in this manner:

"We receive so many requests from around the world that we cannot possibly go to all of those places. So far, we have not received a call from the Amazon, but recently I did send an initial package of literature to some farmer in rural Brazil.

I am one that desires that we should go to where people have never heard of Jesus! One way that the Foreign Mission looks at this is that the ones best suited to minister to them are the locals (indigenous people). So if we can preach and teach people in the various countries and they are converted, they will then spread the message far and wide to their own people through the working of the Holy Spirit."

A prayer offered by a student:

Dear God,

In the Bible you say that we never have to fear because you are always with us. Please help me Lord to know this is true and know I can find strength in you to witness to others. Help me to be prepared and able to tell the truth of what Jesus has done for us. Help me to be in your Word daily and praying for strength and wisdom. Also, I pray for the rest of the group going on this trip and also for the other missionaries all over the world. Thank you for always being there for us and loving us. Amen!

*– John Ruotsala
Foreign Mission Administrator*

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- Support an orphan (\$30 per month)
- Buy a bicycle for a pastor (\$80)
- Memorial donations
- Endowment funds
- Full time Missionary support (\$200 per quarter – Dennis Hilman)
- Wells in India (\$500 per well)
- Mission Hospital in India

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On check, write: Apostolic Lutheran Church Foreign Mission. Donations can be earmarked to support any of the areas identified.

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Go to Russia?

I've never thought about going to Russia on a mission trip until my great grandma said something to me about it. That was the beginning of a difficult but very fun and exciting road. There were a lot of first times for me (having never even been on a plane before), but what better place to do it than Russia with its beautiful cities full of history and interesting people. It was amazing to talk to the older generations, learn about the hardships they went through and what their faith went through and to come out on the other side still believing in Christ!

Talking about just one or two memories or people would not do justice to the whole trip and it would probably be ten pages long, but

while I'm writing one man stands out in my mind. We met him in Kazan; he was blind, but he went around playing his guitar and singing gospel songs to people and churches, spreading God's word. He trusted God to lead him and show him where and who needed the Word even though he was blind. It reminded me of Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.*



Gurez Pudga, Udmurtia

I can't believe the month-long trip went by so fast and how many new friends the Lord blessed me with.

Thank you Lord!

—Debbie Rokala