

New Life Mission Connections

January 1999

Dear friends,

Greetings on behalf of your friends and prayer partners at New Life. We hope it will encourage you to remember that we uphold you in prayer by name every Sunday. We are thankful for the opportunity to share in your mission this way. May the Lord bless your "beautiful feet" as you "bring good news" to people throughout the world.

A Note from Pastor Larry

(The following is the message Pastor Larry shared with the congregation in the November New Life newsletter)

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

(Matthew 9:37-38)

Every year in first-century Palestine, many people celebrated the time of the harvest. It was an occasion for feasts and gatherings.

This month we also gather to give thanks for all our blessings, food clothes, shelter, family, friends, good government, good weather, etc. But we thank God mostly for sending his son Jesus to die for our sins and to rise from death to give us life. We are safe in Him and we have been gathered in to His church.

In Matthew 9, the Lord speaks about the harvest being plentiful, but the workers few. The same is true today.

Consider that:

- Possibly 80% of all missionaries are being sent to areas of the world where the church is already planted. The urgent need is to send missionaries where the Gospel has not yet been preached.

- Approximately 67% of the world's people are not Christian (3.8 billion people).

- One half of these unreached people are neighbors of Christians who have the prime responsibility for contact and witness among them.*

The crisis today is not only the shortage of workers, but the shortage of prayer for workers to be sent. This is the beginning of mission work. I am thankful that here at New Life, we are sending workers on short term mission tours to places like (Slovakia, Hong Kong and Thailand to name a few) but let us continue in prayer for more workers.

This year as you sit down to your thanksgiving meal, I hope you will join me in praying to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.

You are in my prayers,

Pastor Larry

*Source: Dick L. Halsema, "World Missions Survey--1998, *Missionary Monthly* Vol. 102 (March 1998): pp. 16-19.

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SHARE— SHARE— SHARE— SHARE— SHARE— SHARE

We would love to share news about your mission, a thought you have about missions, special prayer needs, or inspirations - send them and we will include them in our next newsletter in April.

This is our "first edition" of this newsletter, and we welcome your comments.

## Around New Life

We thought you might like to hear some news about what is happening around New Life. Our Wednesday evening supper / **Family Bible Night** has a good turnout each week (30-50 people) and we are growing in God's Word. We have been blessed to have the meals provided free by the Geogleins who own a local reception hall. One week we even had fillet mignon. Pretty classy food for New Life.

We have a new **field worker, Jim Keller**, who will be with us for 2 years. Jim, his wife Annette, and their children Gwen, Peter, and Felicia are real New Lifers and have fit in beautifully. Pastor Larry is taking classes towards his doctorate in missiology, so we are glad that Jim is able to help with some of the Bible Studies. In case you are wondering, even though Larry is a doctoral student, he hasn't added too many big words to his sermons.

Last January we expanded our vision to reach out to some internationals in the Ft. Wayne area. After much prayer and several inquiring little adventures by Polly Hennig, Pastor Larry and a few others, it seems the Lord is calling us to reach out to about 350 **Burmese refugees**. On December 12 we hosted a Christmas Party, and 100 Burmese attended. We are praying for leaders among these people to be our partners in this work.

This fall our **youth** who went to Slovakia had several opportunities to share a presentation about their trip. They were especially able to relate mission work to other teenagers in a positive way.

Some of the men from our **Men's Residential Home** are ready to move out on their own. However, they will still be supported by the ministry with meals, Bible Study and fellowship.

**Jeanne Burger** was recently sent by the LWML for a brief visit to the Concordia Gospel Ministry in Thailand where Tim and Michelle Miller and their family serve, and was able to bring us a firsthand report on how the Holy Spirit is working to bring people to faith there

despite the predominance of Buddhism in the country.

Some of you know other missionaries for whom we also pray so ...in other mission news...**Pastor Larry** was able to make contact with some Gypsies in California who are open to the gospel... The **Rohwers**, serving Muslims in the Los Angeles area, just produced a CD of Grace's music and the proceeds will support their work... **John Duitsman** is preparing to make a trip to Africa... **Joe Boway** is busy recruiting missionaries for Lutheran Bible Translators...**Wind River Mission** to the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians just installed a new pastor, Vern Boehlke...and our former field worker, **Jamison Hardy** and his new wife **Wendy** are on vicarage in S. Dakota.

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All Grace

Perhaps you have had a few days like I did recently, when some relationships weren't going too well, some people I loved felt very far away, and my efforts to serve others were either rejected or ignored. I was pretty discouraged and felt reluctant to give of myself to anyone else. Then I read 2 Corinthians 9:8;

*"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need you will abound in every good work."*

Well, there were enough "alls" in that verse to get my attention and to remind me that I had a source of strength beyond my own. My discouragement and reluctance to serve others dissolved. I hope that sharing this verse will strengthen and renew you too.

Blessings in the Lord,  
Jeanne Burger

### **Let Us Know.....**

We want to stand with you in prayer, so if you have any particular concerns or special prayer requests, or if there is anything we can do to help you, please let us know. Call us at 219-420-3024, or write to New Life Lutheran Church, 2424 S. Coliseum Blvd, Ft. Wayne, IN, 46803, or e-mail JBwaterbug@aol.com

# New Life Mission Connections

April 1999

Dear friends,

Greetings from your friends and prayer partners at New Life Lutheran Church. We hope the second edition of this letter will be a blessing to you and a reminder that we are connected to one another in the body of Christ. As we think about the resurrection of our Lord, what a joy it is to know that all of us can "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb. 4:16)

Let us encourage each other as we work to share this wonderful truth with others.

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## Word from our field worker - Jim Keller

(The following is an excerpt from a message Jim shared with us during a Lenten service, and is based on Matthew 13:3-9 & 18-23, and Matt. 25:14-30.)

*"His master replied, 'Good job! You're a good and faithful servant! ... come and share your master's happiness.'"*

You see in this parable that one servant hid the treasure that was given to him. That treasure is the saving word of God. You have been given the saving word of God. What will you do with it? Will you hide it like the last servant did? What happened to him? He had his treasure taken from him and he was cast out.

Don't hide your treasure! You all know people who do not believe; sow your seed. Don't worry if they still do not believe, that is not your responsibility. Your job is to sow the seed, God's job is to make it grow. I know that this is a scary thing. But here is God's promise to you:

*"So I will acknowledge in front of my Father in heaven that person who acknowledges me in front of others." (Matt. 10:32)*

By acknowledging or witnessing Christ to others he acknowledges us in heaven. He speaks our name in heaven when we speak his name here on earth before others. That has got to make you feel good, but Jesus also promises *"And remember that I am always with you until the end of time."* (Matt. 28:20)

When you witness, you are not alone, Jesus is right there with you. When you have Jesus on your side what do you have to fear?

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The image of Christ speaking our name before the Father in heaven was an encouragement to all of us. We trust it will encourage you too. On those days when you are especially weary and discouraged, close your eyes and picture Jesus Christ standing before His Father... hear Him saying "Good job your name, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness.

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Let Us Know.....

We uphold you in prayer by name every Sunday. If you have any particular concerns or special prayer requests, or if there is anything we can do to help you, please let us know. Call us at 219-420-3024, or write to New Life Lutheran Church, 2424 S. Coliseum Blvd, Ft. Wayne, IN, 46803, or e-mail JBwaterbug@aol.com

SOME POINTS FOR PRAYER FROM...

Around the world

We were able to connect via phone with **The Millers** in Bangkok, Thailand, to share about the Lord's work and to pray together. The Concordia Gospel Ministry has been flourishing, they have added English classes and had to find additional space in the building next door. They have also been able to reach out to some men in prison, and 8 men have requested baptism. Please pray for **Into Light Church** in Bangkok, as they look for a new building to house their growing fellowship.

Pastor Mike Hylton wrote to update us on 1 year old Prince Of Peace Luth. Church in West Salem, WI. They average 55 people in attendance on Sundays. He wrote, "God has drawn together a group of people who didn't think of themselves as 'church types.' It's been so amazing to see the Good News of Jesus changing their hearts and lives. They are really turned on to the Bible and worship. I guess they found out that they are 'Jesus types.'" The church was chartered in December.

During early April, we enjoyed a week long visit from **The Beatties** who were on their way from California to Iowa. Pastor Dan, Charlene, Julie, Talitha, and Fedei saw many of the friends they had made here during their 4 years among us. Dan has taken a call to become a missionary in the Des Moines area, where he will seek the lost and help plant new churches.

After several delays, **John Duitsman** finally made his way to Ethiopia in March. He is currently consulting with Sudanese refugees. More on that after he returns. We learned personally about the needs of our dear Sudanese brothers and sisters when seminary student **Andrew Elisa** visited New Life. He shared about the struggles and persecutions his family and fellow believers face, and told us, "If our brothers in the Lord don't stand with us, we will loose our faith." This was a real call for us to pray for persecuted Christians.

Our brother, **Joe Boway**, was such a popular speaker at the Lutheran Student Conference in Arizona, that he was asked to help fill in when

synod president Al Barry was unable to make it due to heavy snow in St. Louis.

The Sorges have had some struggles with getting settled in India, getting appropriate permits for Brian to practice medicine, and for a house and a car. But they are persevering, and by God's grace have met some of the people whom they hoped to reach - from the Moldave Islands.

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Around New Life

In January we missed a service due to snow. The next Sunday, we shared how much we longed to be together and realized how much our fellowship meant to us. If you had walked in on us that day you would have thought we had been apart for years!

In January we also had a visit from Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi and Jim Dimitroff of the Russian Lutheran Church. They were in Ft. Wayne to visit fellow Russians studying at Concordia Seminary.

We are excited that **Jim Keller** has been assigned to us for a summer vicarage. Jim will focus on outreach to the Harvester neighborhood, and Burmese immigrants.

We have quite a few teenagers from the neighborhood showing up on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. So **Annette Keller** has started a Sunday evening bible study just for them.

The Merinos made a trip to Slovakia in March. They almost made headlines when some Jehovah's Witnesses intentionally interrupted a rally and there was nearly a fist fight between the believers and the JW's. It was uncomfortable, but the gospel was shared, and the believers were strengthened by the test as they defended their faith. God is working through the laypeople and some Gypsy elders, and we have a good foundation for spreading the gospel among the Gypsy people there. We look forward to a visit in August from **Pastor Hans Martin Dern**, our counselor for the Gypsy ministry in Slovakia.

New Life Mission Connections

September 1999

Dear friends,

Greetings from your partners in the gospel at New Life Lutheran Church. Recently Pastor Larry encouraged us not to live by our own power and strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for us as we also pray for you that the Holy Spirit will be at work in each of us and through each of us, giving us courage and heavenly power for our lives and our witness.

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." 1 Cor 12:3

ANNOUNCING!!!

NEW LIFE'S WEB PAGE:

On September 7 we officially inaugurated our New Life web page for "friends and family." We have dedicated this effort to the Lord and **pray** it will bring Him glory.

For a few months we will be under construction and working out the bugs. But we want you to check out our progress and give us feedback. You can find us at:

www.Luther95.org/NLLC-FWIN/

In the future we would like to feature some of you, maybe a picture or two and stories from the mission fields. Be thinking about how our page can be help and blessing to you, and also inspire others regarding missions. We will contact you for permission before we use anything from you, but let us know if you have a good story or idea.

Let Us Know.....

We uphold you in prayer by name every Sunday. If you have any particular concerns or special prayer requests, please let us know at:

New Life Lutheran Church,
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd, Ft. Wayne, IN, 46803,
219-420-3024
or JBwaterbug@aol.com

News From Around New Life

Pastor **Hans Martin Dern** visited us during the second week of August. He had many opportunities during the week to worship, study the bible, and visit personally with church members. This gave us a chance to get to know Hans and to learn of his sincere love for the Lord and for the Gypsy people. The visit strengthened our mutual bond in Christ, and our partnership in spreading the gospel among the Gypsy people.

During our Sunday worship service, Hans gave a firsthand report about the mission work, and shared the joys and the struggles involved in sharing the gospel with Gypsies. At the close of the service elder Roger Macke called Hans forward and read Matthew 28:19-20 to him and to the congregation. Then Roger invited people to come forward and pray for Hans. It was a moving moment as many members gathered around pastor Dern, put their hands on him, and prayed for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and for his ministry and his upcoming marriage.

Praise God with us that when the Merinos were in CA in June they found many Gypsy people who were curious about Jesus, listened to God's Word and allowed pastor Larry to pray with them. **Pray** that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in their hearts, and that they will be protected from satan's lies.

Ne-kaun-yeh-la?

That's Burmese for, Are you well? There are now over 600 Burmese refugees in Ft. Wayne. Outside of Burma, that is the largest group of Burmese in one place. What a blessing it was to have Jim Keller assigned to us for a summer vicarage. Jim frequented the oriental grocery stores and other places where he could meet Burmese people. He also took Burmese language lessons from a Buddhist monk, and the monk accepted a copy of the bible from Jim. **Pray** that this monk will become a Christian. We also have some Burmese women studying the bible with a couple of our women. **Pray** that they will grow in faith. We want to be careful not to be associated with any political activities related to Burma, since everything that happens in Ft. Wayne gets into the Burmese papers and our actions have a direct affect on our Christian brothers and sisters in Burma. **Pray** for wisdom.

POINTS FOR PRAISE & PRAYER FROM. OUR MISSIONARIES AROUND THE WORLD

We are always excited to hear from you, and are glad when you share both your joys and burdens so we know how we can pray for you.

We remember and pray for several missionaries in sensitive areas of the world, where it is not possible to send or receive reports. Please join us in praying for these families, that they would receive special encouragement from the Lord this month.

Pastor Dan Beattie has been making good contacts around Des Moines, Iowa where he is in the early stages of his mission work - learning to know the neighborhoods, meeting people, discovering needs. One contact he has made is at a community center in an isolated, almost forgotten part of the city. Pastor Dan and his family are eating at the center once a week and inviting others to join them for conversation and bible study. Dan requests **prayers** for: Ministry contacts, vision, focus, energy, zeal, wisdom, and spiritual, mental and physical health.

Chaplain Steve Lee with Peace Officers Ministries (POM), was one of the first responders to the terrible shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Chaplain Lee assisted officers in the evacuation of students and provided immediate pastoral care for both students and officers. He counseled officers and firefighters at the scene, and prayed with and for them. In the aftermath he has continued to serve victims, victim families and friends, and officers. **Pray** for Steve and his family and the work of POM. You can also contact their web site at:
www.jps.net/bburn/stevelee.htm

Rev. Ron & Lisa Mudge report that they held the first women's workshop in Toulepleu, Cote d' Ivoire, West Africa. Lisa, Suzanne Ramsey and Marlene Barry were the teachers. They shared, "It was wonderful to get to know these women and hear about their faith in Jesus...it is not uncommon here that a woman has lost one or more children due to disease and malnutrition. We spoke of Jesus and how he is God's Son and I asked if God hurt when His Son died. Therese (answered), 'Yes, He hurt.' Many women here have an insight into that sadness, but God knows that grief intimately. Therese was comforted by that fact."

Pray for these women as they return to their congregations to teach other women in the dialect of Krahn. And also, **pray** for eight men who will leave their families to go to Togo for a year of Bible studies.

Brian and Barbara Sorge praise God that they were able to get a visa renewal - not just for one year, but for ten! And they are meeting Islanders who are interested in the gospel.

Praise God that **Joe Boway** was able to lead a successful trip to Guatemala on behalf of Lutheran Bible Translators. The participants on the trip were exploring the possibility of a future in full time mission work. We especially thank God for returning Joe safely, and for teaching him a valuable lesson - that missionaries need **CURRENT** passports for travel. :)

Rev. Vernon Boehlke, pastor at Wind River Lutheran Missions in Wyoming reports that the mission commission of the Wyoming District is planning to begin a Christian child care center at their Arapahoe mission site with a goal of starting a worshipping community of believers among the Arapaho people. They are looking for a director with experience in this work, and an ability to reach out to families with the Gospel of Christ. **Pray** for the success of this ministry, and for the right director.

Some of you may remember **Pastor Dick Thompson** who helped at New Life during our early church planting stages. He recently celebrated his 35th anniversary of ordained ministry. A surprise party was held in his honor by the two congregations he now serves in Louisiana. Dick writes, "It was great. The salt congregation and the pepper congregation that I am serving, both worked hand in hand, enjoying themselves. It was good to see that and to see them mingle. The Lord was honored at the 35th celebration."

We pray the Lord will bless you today, whatever your need or sorrow, joy or reason for praise & thanksgiving.

"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

James 5:13-16

NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

Sharing about our missionaries and our missions

New Life Lutheran Church

Ft. Wayne, Indiana

February 2000

Never ceasing to pray

by Gene Burger

"And so from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Col. 1:9

"You mean you always mention our name every Sunday when you pray at New Life!?"

"Yes, that is a personal prayer by the congregation. We actually pray for all our friends and for their ministry. (Not only on Sunday, but other days, too.) And the good Lord keeps his promises and hears and answers all our sincere prayers. Don't ever doubt it!"

Even when we may not see or feel his answer it is there. I recently really experienced the miraculous power of prayer by New Life friends and others. Our car was totaled when a heavier vehicle hit my side of the car. The next couple of weeks are blank in my memory. I know only what I have been told. Jeanne gave me the "breath of life" and an able doctor at Parkview Hospital put me back together. It was doubtful for a while, but the good Lord had something more for me to do. He heard the prayers of my friends at New Life and others. After two months in the hospital and slow recovery at home I have been able to attend services at New Life. I will always see the smiles on the faces of the New Life friends that said, "we prayed, God answered."

"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power."

1 Thess. 1:11

(Many thanks to all of you who have been praying for Gene Burger, following his car accident in October. And we thank Mr. Burger for writing the devotion for this newsletter.)

Greetings from your friends and prayer partners at New Life Lutheran Church. We hope this letter will be a blessing to you and a reminder that we are connected to one another in the body of Christ.

Let us know if you have any particular concerns or special prayer requests, or if there is anything we can do to help you. Call us at 219-420-3024, or write to New Life Lutheran Church, 2424 S. Coliseum Blvd, Ft. Wayne, IN, 46803, or e-mail JBwaterbug@aol.com You can also check out our web page at:

www.Luther95.org/NLLC-FWIN/

SOME POINTS FOR PRAYER FROM...

Around the world...

Dale & Cheryl Talsma have returned from Nigeria. Dale is studying @ Concordia Theological Seminary in the DMiss program. **Pray** for the Talsmas as they seek God's directions for their future in service to Him.

John & Kathy Duitsman have been called to serve as coordinators for the new churches in East Africa. They write, "...In the refugee camps along the Ethiopian/Sudanese border there many who relate stories of martyrs who have chosen death over Islam. Starving women and children have only to say "yes" to Allah to receive food assistance controlled by Arabs from northern Sudan. Yet many have chosen to suffer rather than repeat the words, "Allah is God and Mohammed is his prophet."

Please pray for wisdom and safety in this work.

Pray - Praise & Give Thanks

Ron & Lisa Mudge are home on furlough and have been visiting family and various churches throughout the midwest and south. Even though we haven't actually seen them in person, some of our "spies" have, and they report that they are doing well, and that little Jonah is a cutie. **Pray** for God's blessing on their furlough time.

Rejoice with **Joe Boway** as he returns to Liberia for special services to dedicate the Krahn bible March 17-19. Joe reports, "The Liberian civil war (1989-1998) killed over 150,000 people and left many without homes, especially the children. About 50% of the Krahn children today are living with relatives because of the death of their parents. Over 75% are without clothes. Many of the children are under twelve years of age and have known little or nothing about the outside world because they live in the jungle away from the civil war. Over 80% of these children lack access to education and health care." Joe has been collecting clothing to distribute on his trip. **Pray** for Joe and the team from **Lutheran Bible Translators** as they travel to and from Liberia, for the Krahn dedications, and for the Lord to guide, teach, and comfort Joe as he looks into the eyes of his people who have been through much suffering. Pray that God's Word will give them new hope.

Pray and rejoice with **The Millers** and the CGM team in Thailand as God has multiplied their work and has provided an additional center. They write, "It looks like Into The Light Church has found a new location..very close to where it is now..it is a great location and a brand new building with reasonable rent.. all miracles! CGM will be opening another English center there as well...there has been great unity between the church and CGM and great strides have been made there in just a few months!"

Dan & Charlene Beattie, missionaries-at-large in Des Moines, IA, are hoping to start a Merchant Mission program that would reach 400 Black/Latino/Asian/African Immigrant/&Anglo worshipers. He writes, "Our ultimate desire is that we purchase the 1/2 block on the Northwest corner of 6th street and College Ave. in Des Moines, and develop it into a community cultural and training center. This center will provide a gathering place for immigrants, neighborhood locals and other people from all over the Des Moines and surrounding area...this center will also be an entry point and launching pad for a new congregational plant...and an economic enterprise that will provide job training for the community and profit for the Lord." **Pray** that **Family of God Ministry** will be able to purchase the property if it is God's will.

From India, **Brian & Barbara Sorge** share that, "a move to a new house was 'emotionally traumatic,' but that they thank God for the blessing of a new and friendly neighborhood, where the neighbors frequently invite them for dinner and where their sons David and Joshua have found new friends. Thank God for his care and provision. Also, they request, "**Pray** for wisdom to know when, with whom, and how to share the Truth. Pray for the courage and wisdom to do so in a loving way. Ask God to give us good opportunities to share His love in word as well as deed."

Pastor Hans Martin Dern and a team of layleaders in Slovakia are traveling to Hungary to attend a bible training program, February 24 through March 25. **Please pray** for Hans, his wife, Sandra, & Roman, Gustav, Julia, and Milan as they travel. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide their learning & help this leadership team grow in fellowship while they are together in Hungary.



SOME POINTS FOR PRAYER FROM...

Around New Life...

Praise God that our work among the **Burmese people** is moving forward in exciting ways. 60 Burmese people attended a Christmas Party at New Life in December. Though most of them are Buddhists, they were delighted by a drama of Jesus' birth. Then seminarian **Jim Keller** gave a ten minute message in Burmese, which our Burmese friends reported was quite good.

Jim is continuing Burmese language lessons from a Buddhist monk, and they do much of their lesson by reading from the bible-- at the monk's suggestion! This monk (Kin Sana) and another monk attended the service portion of the Christmas gathering, and also spent a few hours at the Keller family home on Christmas Day. In March we will be starting weekly ESL classes for the Burmese that will include bible lessons as well.

Not long ago we called Thailand and consulted with Tim Miller about this ministry. Tim also arranged to have some printed materials sent to us. We were grateful to have an experienced overseas missionary who can advise us about our foreign mission here in the United States.

New Life congregation voted in January to call Jim as our vicar. This was an act of faith, as we do not have the money in our budget (yet) for this, but we are trusting the Lord to provide.

Please pray for Jim, his wife Annette and his family, for the ESL classes, for Kin Sana to accept Jesus as his Savior, and for the Lord to provide the finances for Jim's vicarage.

"Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

Matthew 9:37-38



The Future of the Gypsies: Jesus Christ

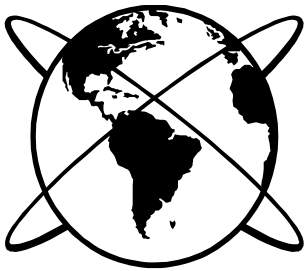
The Lord has been opening many doors for our **Gypsy ministry** as well. In January **Pastor Larry** and the **members of New Life** made a commitment to expand our work among the Gypsy people. Larry has been getting many calls and e-mails from Gypsies who feel guilty about their lifestyle. As one Gypsy fortuneteller recently said to him:

"I am scared of not going to heaven...I feel... it's not right... what I'm doing [fortunetelling]. But we do it anyway. And I feel that maybe one day I'll be judged for that."

Because Pastor Larry is the only Lutheran Gypsy pastor, we have a vision to send him to teach churches, pastors and laypeople how to win Gypsies for Christ based on an accurate understanding of Gypsy culture and a proper application of God's Word to their situation.

We are excited that our friends & partners, **Gary & Grace Rohwer** have been able to reach out to some Gypsy people in Los Angeles, and now they are coming to ask questions about the bible. We are also eager to get an on-line bible study for Gypsies started on our web-site.

Please pray for God's guidance and wisdom for our expanding ministry to the Gypsies, for Gary and Grace's outreach, and for Gypsies to accept Jesus as their Savior.



"They were from every race,
tribe, nation and language,
and they stood in front of the
throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

RELIEF!

If you have an earache or get something in your ear, you can't look into your own ear to solve the problem. Even if you have a mirror, you could bend, and twist and shine a bright light at the ear, but you couldn't see the problem. The one thing you can do, though, is get help. You need another person, someone who knows how to fix ear problems, like a doctor, to help you.

It is like that with sin. We can't get relief from our sins by ourselves. We need God's help. But we often try to take care of sin by ourselves instead. Our thinking goes like this - first I'll get rid of all my sins, then I can go to God. But that would be like thinking - first I'll take care of my ear problem, then I'll go to the doctor.

The bible tells us, in the following verses, that God is willing to help everybody get rid of their sins. *"For the grace (free gift) of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."* (Titus 2:11-12)

God can help us because He understands our problem with sin, just like the doctor under-

stands our ear problems. God helped us by sending us, *"Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own."* (Titus 2:13-14)

We can't fix our problem with sin on our own. But the one thing we can do is go to someone who can help us-- Jesus Christ. We don't have to get rid of our sins BEFORE we go to Jesus. We must take our sins TO Jesus. He will get rid of them for us. He will purify us. He took care of that when He died on the cross for us.

What a relief! Jesus will take away our burden of sin if we ask for His help. Then our response can be just like the bible says... as *"people that are his very own,"* we will be *"eager to do what is good."* (Titus 2:14)

-by Jeanne Burger
(This devotion is a sample from our web page, which is focused on reaching out to Gypsy people)

The Lord Provides a Worker for the Harvest Excitement Grows for New Life Burmese Ministry

At first there were only a few contacts among the 500-600 Burmese people in Ft. Wayne. But we began to pray. Then Jim Keller was assigned a summer vicarage with us, to explore the potential for our outreach among the Burmese. And we continued to pray. As Jim learned Burmese from a Buddhist monk, the two men developed a friendship and Jim had opportunities to

share his faith. The monk even joined Jim and his family when they gathered to celebrate Christ's birth. And more doors opened to meet Burmese people, most of them Buddhists, who don't know Jesus Christ personally. We continued to pray. And at New Life our love for the Burmese people grew. You could see in Jim's eyes, and hear in his



Shining the Light of God
in dark places

Burmese Ministry Cont.

wife Annette's voice that the Lord had placed these people on their hearts in a special way. More Burmese arrived every day from the refugee border camps in Thailand, and it seemed as though the Lord had brought these people right to our doorstep and said, "here, tell them about Me!" It was all happening so fast. We had to pray. We had no extra money in the budget for a worker. But God had placed them on our doorstep! And He said, "The harvest is plentiful, pray to

the Lord God of the harvest for workers." We knew we had a special worker. And the harvest increased to nearly 1000 Burmese. We were eager to call Jim as a vicar to continue his work, leading us in our outreach among the Burmese people. So we prayed. And we wrote grants..and shared our mission story with others...and trusted...and asked the Lord to provide. And Praise God for His provision. On April 11, Jim Keller was assigned to New Life as our vicar, with the

intent that he will continue after that as our assistant pastor and missionary to the Burmese people. First there were a few contacts...and many prayers! Praise God - for providing a worker for the harvest!

Krahn Celebration

Give thanks to God that the Krahn people now have the Word of God in their heart language. **Joe Boway** recently returned from Liberia where services were held to dedicate the Krahn Bibles. This was the first chance

Mission Updates:

that Joe had to return to his homeland since he fled for his life ten years ago. Joe has returned to the US safely, with much on his heart and mind. He witnessed much poverty and despair in the wake of Liberia's long civil war. But he expressed much joy over the dedication and distribution of the new bibles, and much hope that God's Word has the power to change lives, and bring his people eternal life and salvation. We hope to have a longer report from Joe in a future issue.

Korea connected

With this issue of MC we welcome **Pastor Chul Kim** and his wife **Hyun Sook**. Pastor Kim recently re-

ceived his doctor of missiology at Concordia Seminary in Ft. Wayne and has since returned to South Korea. Dr. Kim has begun to plant a new church, one with a heart for missions, that he hopes will someday help him reach out in mission to places like North Korea. The new church is named Bethel. Dr. and Mrs. Kim have two sons. We're glad to have you connected Dr. & Mrs. Kim

Milwaukee Missionary

Very soon there will be another missionary in the Milwaukee area. Please keep **Dan and Crystal Voth** in your prayers as they await

the birth of their first child, due the middle of May. Isn't it amazing what wonderful missionaries children can be! They can open doors that adults can't. We would love to hear stories of how your children opened mission doors. Please send them to us.

Lutheran Brotherhood Grant

In 2000, New Life Lutheran Church received a \$10,000 grant from the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation (LBF). We are one of 45 congregations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to share in the \$588,800 grant given

through the Foundation's Church Extension program. This LBF grant program gives eight Lutheran national church bodies \$1,790,000 each year to develop new congregations and assist established congregations to undertake special evangelism programs. Our grant will support our Burmese ministry.

*WE LOVE TO TELL
YOUR STORIES
If you have news to share
or prayer needs please
contact us*

*Lutheran
Brotherhood
gives generous
grant*

The Future of the Gypsies — Jesus Christ

This is our new motto for our outreach among the Gypsy people around the world. And the Lord has been blessing our efforts. Recently Pastor Larry gave the following report on our work in Slovakia.

Pastor Hans Martin Dern, his wife Sandra, and Roma Mission Team members Roman, Julia and Gustav recently returned from the trip to Hungary where they attended a bible school program. Pastor Dern reports that the Roma leaders are growing in faith and ability.

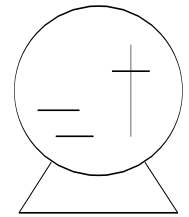
Gustav is a great example. He was not able to join the group in Hungary at first, because of some border problems. But Gustav

showed that he trusted the Lord to use all things for good, even border delays. While he waited in Bratislava he met with many people, including the Bishop of the Lutheran Church. And he also found opportunities to share God's Word with some Roma people.

Leadership in ministry is a new thing for a Roma man. In addition, Gustav had been thinking that perhaps he was too old to take on the task of leadership. But in Bratislava, many people came to talk with and ask questions of him. After he joined the rest of the team in Hungary, he found the same thing happening to him at

the bible school. Gustav learned that he is already seen as a leader. As Pastor Dern said, "I am looking forward to seeing him used by God in this mission."

Praise God for providing reliable men who are qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2), in order to multiply our outreach among the Roma people. Please continue to pray that God would guide and strengthen these leaders.



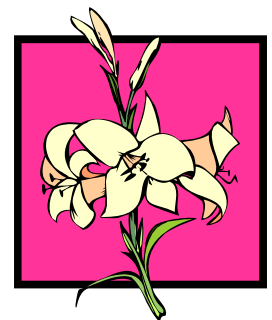
The Future of the Gypsies: Jesus Christ

*Please pray for our
Dear Workers in sensitive
places around the world,
where it is not possible to
write openly about
Christianity. Pray that
they will know special
strength from God.*

Prayer Requests

Please pray:

- And thank God for providing our Vicar, Jim Keller. Ask God to bless his ministry among us and his missionary work among the Burmese people
- And Praise God for providing Mark Lange as our Church Administrator. Ask God to guide his transition from his current workplace to his work for the church
- That we will continue to trust God to provide the income we need to support Keller and Lange families.
- For the planting of Bethel church in Korea, and for Pastor Kim's wisdom in his ministry
- For the delivery of the Voth's baby, and for wisdom as new parents. Pray for this new baby to be a partner with us in the gospel.
- For the Lord to use all of us to reach Burmese people, Gypsy people, and other lost people.
- Praise God for the dedication of the Krahn NT and for giving Joe a safe trip to & from Liberia.
- For Pastor Hans Martin Dern, the Roma Mission Team in Slovakia, and for leadership development among the Gypsy people.
- For Pastor Larry's next trip to Slovakia, May 21—June 4. And for Linda and Adam who will accompany him.



**May the resurrection of our
Lord bring you great joy**

New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone 219.420.3024
Fax: 219.422.9180
Email: jmburgr@aol.com

New Life In Missions:

*A Congregation -
Living by Grace
Growing in Faith
Spreading the Gospel*

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NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

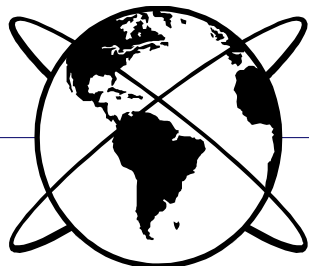
News from and for our partners in Christ

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Matt. 9:37-38

INSIDE:

- Excitement Grows for New Life
Burmese Ministry
- New Administrator
- Gypsy Update
- Prayer Requests



"They were from every race,
tribe, nation and language, and
they stood in front of the
throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

THOSE WHO ARE "HOLDING THE ROPE" ALSO SHARE IN THE REWARDS

In 1786 a man named William Carey wanted to go and share the good news of Jesus in Asia. He was told, "When God wants to convert the heathen- he will do it without consulting you!" Carey was devastated. Everywhere he turned he met opposition. But just when he was ready to abandon his vision, a man named Tom Potts told him he liked his idea. Carey's enthusiasm was rekindled, but he knew he could never fulfill his dreams on his own. So he got a few friends together, sat them down and held up a common everyday rope.

"I will go down to India," he said, "if you will hold the rope." By "holding the rope," he meant praying for him consistently, supporting him financially, and communicating to the churches back in England regularly. They gladly agreed. Carey was sent to

India and that made possible the translation of the Bible into eleven languages! Though Carey may have been the one to travel to India, he knew that it was possible only because of the partners back in England who were "holding the rope."

The Bible says, "**From Jesus the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**" (Eph. 4:16)

My dear friends, we have been "holding the rope" for each other by being partners in God's mission to the lost people of the world. I pray for you and thank God for our partnership. We join you in your willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus to free people from spiritual bondage.

I know they are caught in

bondage because my wife and I are Gypsies who were freed from bondage 20 years ago.

Let me ask you to re-commit yourselves to God's mission, and do not give up.

Because, whether you are a man or woman, boy or girl, on the front lines, or praying and supporting financially, there is no telling what you might do once you realize that in God's mission, **those who are holding the rope share in the rewards.**

*May God reward you for
"holding the rope" for us.*

*You are in my prayers,
Pastor Larry Merino*

Pastor Merino Reports On Growing Gypsy Leadership In Slovakia

I have encouraging news to share with you about our Gypsy leadership team in Slovakia. We have been praying that the Lord would provide reliable men to teach others, (2 Tim. 2:2) because Spirit-filled godly

leaders will be the key to successful outreach among the Gypsy people. Let me share with you how I saw our prayers being answered during our recent visit to Slovakia.

While we were there we

held four rallies and three Gypsy men, Gustav, Jusso, and Lasko did most of the speaking. These men are

(cont. on page 2)
really getting to know the bible and they are able to bring out messages that are

Celebration! Krahn New Testament is Dedicated



Joe Boway sent us the following report about his recent trip to Liberia.

I wish you could have been there to experience...

The weekend of March 17 was a special one for the Krahn people in Liberia. After nearly 29 years of translation and literacy work, the Krahn New Testament was dedicated. Hundreds of Krahn speakers from almost 30 villages **celebrated for three days!** I wish you could have been there to experience it with me and others from Lutheran Bible Translators.

It was encouraging to see the strong faith of the Krahn believers after many trage-

dies caused by the civil war. It was also a blessing to see my family and other relatives. My father still remembers everyone at New Life.

On behalf of all the Krahn people, I want to thank you and Lutheran Bible Translators for all your prayers, financial and moral support for me and the Krahn New Testament. Without you and others standing with LBT and the Krahn project, it would not have been possible to complete this task. I pray that someday in heaven you will meet the Krahn people who you so richly blessed.

Clothes with Compassion

Thanks also for being a

part of the Clothes with Compassion project. Your prayers and gifts are now making a big difference in the lives of the Krahn kids.

The clothes brought a much needed message of love and hope to the Krahn kids and their parents. The few churches in the Krahn villages are now full with children for Sunday schools because of the clothes project. I just got a letter from a lay leader informing me that the children are even bringing their parents to church for the first time.

God bless you as you **“hold the rope”** for Joe!

Growing Gypsy Leadership cont.

really helpful to the people. Jusso, for example, has such a beautiful testimony to share with his people. For several years during my visits, Jusso has been listening in the background. But with Pastor Dern helping him Jusso has been gradually growing in faith. And it has changed his life. His neighbors notice it. His wife notices it. And even his children told me things are so much better at home. Now his whole family is involved in the mission--traveling together and singing in the band.

I asked Jusso, “What do you think is the most important thing for you to do now?” He said, “Without a doubt, the most important thing for me to do now is be an example. Just show the other Gypsies... no, I’m not perfect, but I am trying to not drink, and not stay out

late, and try and take better care of my family.” His testimony is so real; it touches the lives of the other Gypsies there much better than I could.

Pastor Dern will be spending a lot of time now discipling these three Gypsy men, along with another young white man who is interested in Gypsy ministry. They have set a goal of holding ten rallies throughout the Gemer region between now and the end of the year. This will give them a wonderful opportunity to grow in leadership together.

The amazing thing is that these leaders all live in or near the village of Slavosovce, in the Gemer region, a place that seemed the most hopeless when we first started our work in Slovakia in 1996. But God has been at work in response to your

prayers. And now the work is going so well in that place, that I may even be able to explore new possibilities for Gypsy outreach in other regions of Slovakia the next time I am there.

On behalf of the Gypsy people in Slovakia, thank you for **“holding the rope”**, for us, and for our Gypsy mission team in Slovakia, because your prayers and financial support are helping to bring the saving Word of Jesus Christ to these lost people.



It Starts With One....

Sometimes it seems as though there are so many people who don't know that Jesus Christ is their Savior, that we wish we could tell millions of them all at once.. today, right now! At times like this we don't think it will make much difference to talk to just one person.

But with our Burmese Refugee ministry, we have learned that reaching out to one person is important.

For over a year two New Life women have been meeting with one Christian Burmese woman— to help meet some of her family's needs, to help her practice her English, and to pray and study the bible with her.

With close to 1000 Burmese refugees in Ft. Wayne, it didn't seem like much. Just one woman.

Then suddenly, one day Yhon (not her real name) began introducing us to several of her Burmese friends, all of whom are Buddhists. Yhon was eager to have us meet her friends. And to our surprise she began to invite her friends to the nearby home of our vicar, Jim Keller, for English lessons (and a bible lesson) – even though the Keller's didn't have the key to their house yet!

But all worked out well. Vicar Keller picked up the key early on a Wednesday

morning, and by 11am there were 4 Burmese women and 12 children having class on Burmese floor mats in the otherwise bare Keller house. That's 12 children, counting the new Keller baby who was due any minute.

Sometimes it starts with just one... maybe there is some "one" you can reach.

God reward you for **"holding the rope"** for Vicar Keller, his family, and Yhon, as they tell many Burmese people that Jesus is their Savior.



Shining the Light of God
in dark places

Administration Is At The Core

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." (1 Cor. 4:19)

New Life's outreach has recently been expanding through 3 distinct, yet inter-connected areas of mission; 1) our Gypsy ministry, 2) our Burmese ministry & 3) our congregation & neighborhood ministry. We are grateful the Lord is providing for these minis-

tries through gifts from individual partners and through several grants.

Because we want to be responsible with the gifts God has given to our church, we have added Mark Lange to the church staff, as our administrator.

In addition to handling financial matters, Mark will be organizing schedules for the congregation, for Pastor Larry & for Vicar Keller. Since our missionaries are

often on the move, out of the office, and even out of the country... Mark is also a big help in "holding down the fort" in Ft. Wayne.

Mark also helps teach confirmation class, and other bible studies.

We are glad to have Mark on our staff, **"holding the rope"** for our missionary pastor & vicar and all of us!

Please pray....

*for Gustav, Jusso, & Lasko to speak boldly at the rallies and to grow in faith and leadership

*for Pastor Dern as he trains Gypsy lay-leaders in Slovakia

* for the baby Pastor Dern and his wife Sondra are expecting in September

* for the baby Mark Lange

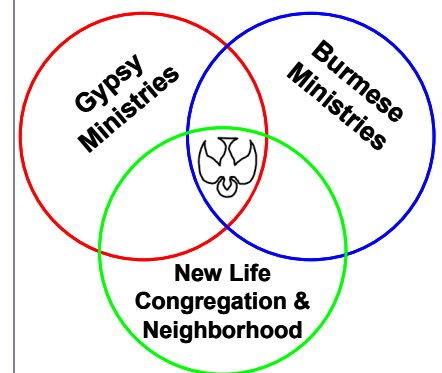
and his wife Sue are expecting in October

*for newborn Parker James and the entire Keller family
* that God will bless Yhon for her faithful witness and work for the Lord

* that many Burmese people will come to know Jesus as their Savior through Yhon
* for new opportunities to reach Gypsy people around

the world

* that God's Word will change lives among the Krahn people in Liberia
* that God will strengthen all who serve Him
* that God will show each of us one person to whom we can witness



New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone 219.420.3024
Fax: 219.422.9180
Email: jmburgr@aol.com

New Life In Missions:

*One Congregation
Many missions*



NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

News from and for our partners in Christ

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

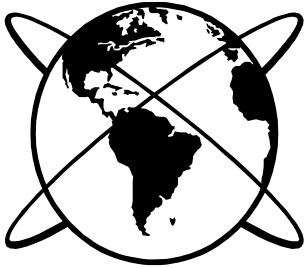
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
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INSIDE:

- It Starts With One
- New Administrator
- Gypsy Leadership Grows
- Celebration of Krahn Bible
- Prayer Requests

We're on the web
www.newlife.in.lcms.org



"They were from every race,
tribe, nation and language, and
they stood in front of the
throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

Ordinary People, Special Work

"It takes a special person to do what you do." I hear that from a lot of people. Usually when I hear that I also hear, "I could never do that." But the question is "Why?" Why do people think that they cannot do mission work? Does mission work really take a special person with special training?

Apparently that's what Moses thought. He thought that a person needed special voice lessons in order to serve God (Ex 4:10). Jeremiah thought it took someone more mature (Jer. 1:6). The truth is, as you examine the people God used, you find that they really were not that special or unique. God used an old carpenter to build a boat; He used a young shepherd to kill a giant; He used a fig tree dresser, fishermen, a tax collector, even a murderer to carry out His mission. It should be obvious that God does not use special people, but rather He uses ordinary people to do special things.

Two such ordinary people come to mind right now. One is very young; some would say that he is too young for mission work. The other person is quite old; again some would say that he is too old for mission work.

The first missionary is my son Parker, or as he is known among the Burmese, Pyi Soe Aung. Little Pyi was born July 6, 2000. Though he is little he is a great missionary! The Burmese women naturally flock to him, and while they fuss over him it gives my wife opportunities to meet them and share her faith with them. When Pyi Soe Aung was baptized, many Burmese were in attendance. I was able to share in Burmese the significance of Pyi's being washed clean of all of his sins and how now he is free from the curse of reincarnation. My son Parker is a great missionary. He knows just when to smile at a person to make them stop and listen. As he grows, he will be even a

bigger blessing to New Life Burmese Ministry. The reason is that little Pyi will be able to speak both English and Burmese!

The second missionary, whom some would call too old, is our Deacon, Gene Burger. He is now 80 years old. He, too, is a great missionary. Whereas young Pyi charms the Burmese with his baby ways, Mr. Burger commands their respect as a venerated Elder. The Burmese refugees were all high school and college students when they became freedom fighters. There are very few older Burmese refugees. This has left a gap in their lives as they need elders. Mr. Burger was quick to realize this, and he has used his gray hair to positively influence many young Burmese men and women.

God did not make Pyi and Mr. Burger special; rather He took an ordinary baby and an ordinary retired person and used them in a special way. So too, if you would ask any of the missionaries who also receive this newsletter, they would probably tell you that there is nothing special about them except how God uses them.

Remember: God takes ordinary, common things like water, dirt, bread, wine and yes even babies and old men and He uses them in special ways (baptism, making man, communion, mission work). God can use an ordinary person just like you to do His special work!

God Bless you,
Vicar Jim Keller

*How do you
communicate the
Gospel to the
Burmese people
when you don't
speak Burmese?*



Myanmar
is now the name of
the country formerly
called Burma

Ordinary People, Special Work-- Communicating God's Word to Burmese People

Recently a friend of Jim & Annette Keller wrote to them and asked, "I don't know how you talk with these Burmese women like Yhon and her friends. Do you use pictures to tell Bible stories and truths? Do you know enough Burmese to converse?"

We thought many of our readers might have the same question, and would enjoy reading Annette's answer.

We are blessed in that Yhon's English continues to improve, and we are better at understanding her. We use a lot of gestures. Sometimes it takes a couple of tries at a sentence to say it in a way she comprehends.

Our ears are being trained to listen carefully to what is said in both English and Burmese, and we are forced to speak slowly, simply, and precisely.

Jim is able to carry out some conversations in Burmese or a mix of Burmese and English. He also can tell the Creation account in Burmese now. I know how to say "Hello, How are you, I am fine, Nice to see you, and Have you eaten?"

We are using a picture book that illustrates the truths of the Bible very well. Tim Heiney, a missionary in Guinea, developed it. We also use easy reader Bible story-books. Not only do they have colorful and descriptive illustrations, but they also give our ESL students a sense of accomplishment in that "they read a book in English."

We follow these stories in English while they read the account in the Burmese Bible (if they can read Burmese). We also have some Burmese Bible "comic books" which

we use if we have one available for that portion of the Bible. In Burma the people love to read comic books, so we are grateful a friend in Burma has made some available for various bible stories.

We also give a "God's Word for the Nations" Bible to those who have progressed in their English skills and read Bible passages together as our English lesson.

Yhon and others serve as translators for us, too. The Burmese are very quick to help out a fellow refugee who does not understand English as well.

One Burmese man (a Muslim) helps by translating the directions I am giving to my ESL students. He also translates the Bible study portion. Jim knows enough of what he is saying so that we can be sure he is giving an accurate translation. We are praying that he will become a Christian as he hears (and speaks) the Word of God.

*Thank you for your prayers for our Burmese ministry. Your prayers and support encourage the Kellers and our Burmese Christian friends...**ordinary people doing God's special work** among the Burmese people in Ft. Wayne.*

A Special Prayer of Thanks to God for...

God's Word to the Nations Bible Society— for giving us the right to translate their booklet "God's Words of Encouragement" into Burmese. We now have copies of these in hand to give to our Burmese friends.

Our friend in Burma — who has donated thousands of hours preparing and printing "God's Words of Encouragement" in the Burmese language. The project also brought a blessing to many in Burma who were involved in the printing.

Our financial supporters— your gifts enabled us to provide our friend in Burma with a new computer. It will be put to good use preparing Christian Burmese materials.

The Indiana District LWML— for granting us \$10,000 to support our work among the Burmese people.

*We thank God for you.. **ordinary people who are doing God's special work** through your gifts.*

Ordinary People, Special Work-- Among Gypsies in California

The following is from our mission partner, Pastor Gary Rohwer who has been working with some of Gypsy people in California...

I visited with a Gypsy woman last week. She told me that she "hated" the Gypsy life, which she described as putting her neck on the line every time she tells fortunes in order to provide cars and expensive watches etc. for the family. She will be the one who gets in trouble if the police come after her.

It made the situation pretty clear for me that the women are left little alternative. They haven't been given an education and are "forced" to earn money dishonestly by the men.

Of course, if Christ calls someone to Himself, he will make it possible to leave these things. But there is a cost. For a young

women with several children, without an education, who lives with the clan and faces persecution if she doesn't tell fortunes, there is little human alternative.

However, we know there is an alternative. If Christ calls someone, He will help them to get out of the world system so that they can serve him. But there is definitely a cost. These women must be willing to follow Christ at all cost. Please pray that they will.

*Thank you for your prayers for Gypsy ministry around the world. Your prayers encourage Gary & Grace Rohwer and their family... **ordinary people doing God's special work among the Gypsy people in California.***

"The Gypsy women are left with little human alternative."

Ordinary Person, Special Work-- Among Gypsies in Slovakia

Viola Fronkova, our partner in Slovakia, recently asked for prayers because of the following situation.

Three men with baseball bats went into the apartment of a Gypsy (Roma) family and beat a woman (the mother of 8 children) so badly that she died. The children were also beaten. Immediately the suspicion was on the "skinheads" who have been showing a lot of hatred towards the Gypsy people in Slovakia. A gathering was planned to denounce such racial hatred, and even the police were afraid they would not be able to cope with the massive conflict. Viola was invited to speak at this potentially dangerous gathering. Viola reported.

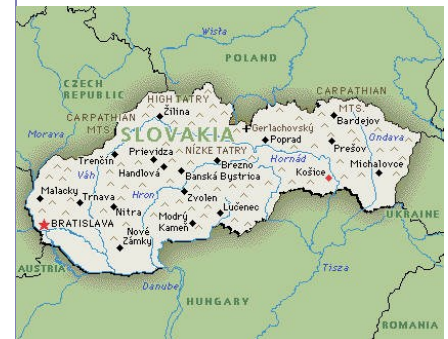
"...I did go- with your prayers- and it was very clear in Zilina- Lord is at work. Things were unexpectedly calm. I was asked to share the message so I could present the Gospel to about 300 Romany people and about 200 white people, plus police people present. I could speak for about 5

minutes... I could speak also with the bereaved family.

The Gypsy people appreciated the message and even confessed to their own wrongdoings. Some have asked for prayers for their enemies.

I have been asked to write a script and prepare a program for national TV about this situation. I need Lord's wisdom, how to share the Gospel. Please pray for the Lord's guidance and help with technical problems....It is dear Lord who keeps this door open for us, in His very special desire, to bring the Gospel to His Romany people in Slovakia."

Thank you for your prayers for Viola, an **ordinary person doing God's special work among the Gypsy people in Slovakia.**



Slovakia

It is very clear the Lord is at work

New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone 219.420.3024

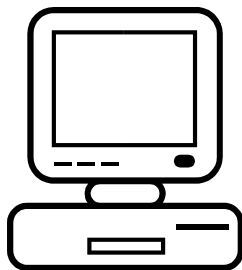
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Many missions



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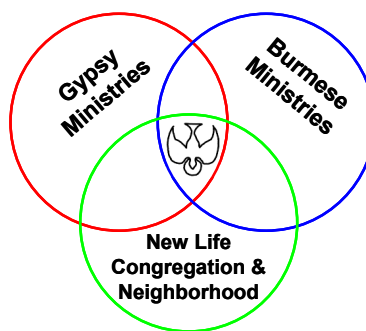
Questions & answers
Special devotions

NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

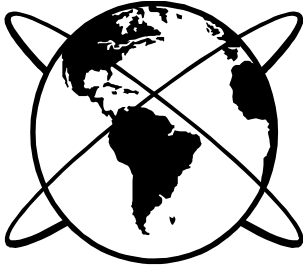
News from and for our partners in Christ

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:18-19



INSIDE: Ordinary People: Doing God’s Special Work



"They were from every nation, tribe,
race and language, and they stood in
front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

MANY PARTS—ONE BODY

St. Paul wanted the Christians in Corinth to believe in the gift of love and of working together, so he warned them to work together.

At New Life Lutheran, we also must accept, apply and adapt the words from 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 where Paul uses the human body as an allegory for the church. This example illustrates the unity and diversity of the gifts and talents exercised by Christians, who are members of the one body of Christ. And it helps us understand how to be a congregation in mission.

MANY PARTS BUT ONE BODY...

Some of us may go to Slovakia, or California, or Burma while others are called to stay behind and pray. And since the U.S State Department has determined that Ft. Wayne makes a good home for many refugees, a few other people have been getting first hand experience in mission work by ministering to

these people from 23 nations.

This kind of work needs a lot of people working together. Some preach, some help the sick, while other people drive vans. Some are fervent pray-ers, some give financial gifts, and others encourage with the Word of God. We are many parts but one body. If everyone did the same work, then what would become of the body?

YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST...

Some people may seem to be more important than others but in fact Jesus is the important one. He is the head. Though we are diverse, He is the one who unites us all. Without Him we are nothing and without Him we can do nothing.

Jesus is the one who died for us all and rose from the dead. Without Him we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins. But we are humbled and happy to know that all of us working together—including you

who receive our Mission Connection—are the body of Christ.

EACH OF YOU IS PART OF IT...

As we reach out and minister to Gypsies, Burmese and people in our neighborhood, we realize that it takes great unity and diversity to get this work done. And yet we also realize that this really isn't our work at all—it is the work of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are thankful to God to be working with you, our partners and fellow members of the Body of Christ.

You are in my prayers,

Pastor Larry C. Merino

"There are different ways of serving, and yet the same Lord is served. There are different types of work to do, but the same God produces every gift in every person...the body is one unit and yet has many parts. As all the parts form one body, so it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:5-6, 12

**"From every
nation..."**



A Mission Field In Our Backyard

Ft. Wayne has a mission field right in its own backyard—at the Centlivre Apartment Complex, where people from at least 23 different nations are represented among the tenants, including countries such as Sudan, Pakistan, Burma, and Bosnia where many of the people are Buddhist, Muslim, or Hindu and haven't had a chance to hear the Gospel.

The Indiana District of the LCMS has opened a "Help Center" at the apartments where volunteers can learn more about these people while meeting some of their physical needs. Vol-

unteer coordinator, Michelle Yamanaka, follows up on requests for help which have included food, clothing, medical assistance, homework assistance, explaining American customs, teaching English and a variety of other needs. The volunteers were especially excited about the great turnout for an International Christmas Party held at the Center.

Mission research is also a big part of the project. Research coordinator, Jeanne Burger, explains, "We want to determine the best ways to share the gospel with these people, and an important part of that is learn-

ing more about them and their potential spiritual needs. What struggles or losses have they had? How are their family lives structured? What beliefs do they have? What barriers are there to Christianity?"

The Indiana District plans to use the mission research data to help plan strategies for future outreach in order to take advantage of this golden opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with lost people from many nations.

**"From every
tribe..."**



A Missionary Will Come Soon

When Pastor Merino went to Slovakia in November he visited a group of Gypsy people there who are living in terrible physical and spiritual conditions. He shared the following about that visit in an interview after he returned home.

Tell us about the Gypsies you met

I met some Gypsies who live on top of an old Mercury mine in a place that is completely desolate. There wasn't a stick of vegetation anywhere. There was nothing but black dirt, and five or six very smoky fires scattered about... not nice looking campfires—instead, you could hardly see from the smoke. There were hundreds of Gypsies outside on that dirt, in the smoke, on a day that was like a cold November day in Indiana—and most had few or no clothes on at all. It was surreal. Everybody was speechless. We didn't even know how to respond. Finally, I was

the first one to speak. I told them I was a Gypsy pastor from America and I had come all this way to see them. Then I shared the gospel message. As soon as I started speaking, they all started crying.

Why do you think they cried?

I think the Lord spoke to them. The gospel did it. In a way, when they were crying it made them human again. For a while when we first got there, it was like just a mass of something that wasn't human. It was after they started crying that I realized they really were human. I could see that some of them were crying only because they felt bad for the others. I saw how they cared about each other and that they had the real human emotion of being able to shed a tear for someone else. I suppose because of the conditions they have to really help each other.

Do you think anything will happen there now because of your visit?

Well, I promised them that a missionary would come soon. And hundreds of them clapped. I am glad that our dear friend Pastor Hans Martin Dern has promised to go back with the team of Gypsy leaders. These men will go to the settlement once a month, to share the gospel, and to get to know these people better.

These Gypsy people feel outcast by both men and God. Through your prayers and support you will help let them know that the Savior accepts them because he accepts people from all nations and tribes.

**See pictures from the Slovakia trip at:
www.newlife.in.lcms.org**

Gypsy Website Excitement

Visit us at:
www.newlifeforthegypsies.org

Our Gypsy website went up in August and by December we had about 1500 visitors per month from around the world.

The most popular page has been an interactive one where Pastor Merino gives answers to questions about God and the bible. The bi-weekly devotional page has also been popular. The devotions

acknowledge positive things about the Gypsy culture, such as their respect for the authority of their elders, and consider the fact that Gypsies don't understand most church and religious terms.

New Life's webmasters, brothers Jason Lange (16) and Justin Lange (14), spend many hours maintaining the site for the church. Soon we

also hope to have one-minute audio messages from Pastor Merino on the site.

For many Gypsies, this website is their only contact with Christianity. We thank God for using us to reach people from the Gypsy race around the world.

**"From every
race..."**



"...God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what race he belongs to. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." Acts 10:34-36

Thank you

Over the past few months so many of you have encouraged our mission work through your kind words, prayers and financial gifts. We are grateful for all of your support! We pray that God will richly reward you for helping to share the gospel with people from all nations.

Vision: Tunnel Or Focused?

By Vicar Jim Keller

This past Christmas, New Life held its third annual Burmese Christmas Party. Over 100 Burmese attended! Our family also celebrated Christmas morning for the second year in the row with the Buddhist monk, who teaches me Burmese. We also had a Sudanese family over for dinner.

Maybe you are thinking right now, "Wait just a second, aren't you supposed to be the missionaries to the Burmese? What are you doing inviting Sudanese to your house?"

Certainly we need to be focused in our ministry. But we want our focus to be on the Lord. Philip is a good example. He was focused on the Holy Spirit who led him to evangelize people in other towns and villages besides his original target group and his own people. (See Acts 8 for the

complete story of Philip)

The Lord has placed the Burmese people on our hearts, but the same God who has enough love for you, me, Burmese, Gypsies, etc., also has enabled us to have enough love for whomever He places into our paths. We had the Sudanese over for dinner because the Lord had placed this wonderful opportunity before us. You see, it wasn't our idea to invite the Sudanese to our house, it was theirs!

While visiting Burmese people in the Centlivre Apartments, we met a Sudanese woman who invited us into her apartment. While talking about our upcoming Centlivre Christmas party this woman (a Muslim), invited herself to our house to celebrate Christmas! She and her family had never been in an American home before and they were curious about our

lives and how we celebrated the holidays.

Certainly our primary focus is outreach to the Burmese, but we are not so focused on the Burmese that we have tunnel vision when it comes to others. Instead, we are trying to remain focused on the Holy Spirit and His leading. This means being open to opportunities among the Sudanese, Bosnians, our New Life neighbors and others that the Lord places in our path.

Our prayer for all of you is that you too will have a focused vision, focused on the Holy Spirit and His leading!

**"From every
language..."**



New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone: 219.420.3024

Fax: 219.422.9180

Email: jmburgr@aol.com

New Life In Missions:
One Congregation
Many missions



On the web at:

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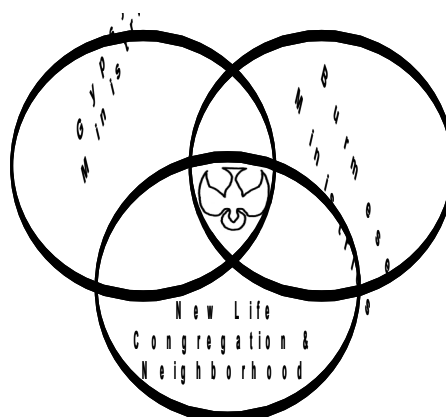
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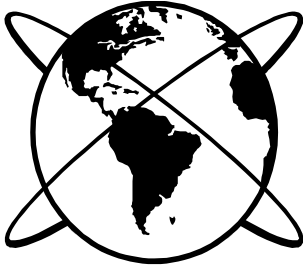
NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

News from and for our partners in Christ

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:18-19





"They were from every nation, tribe,
race and language, and they stood in
front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

The Messiness of Missions

At New Life we often talk about how messy mission work is. Our worship service seldom starts on time, and many of our Burmese friends don't even arrive until after the service is underway. So during the beginning of the service our vicar is usually at the back of the church arranging for one of the men to do the bible reading in Burmese.

Some mornings I come in and find half empty coffee cups all over the church. On Sunday mornings, it is not unusual for me to have someone come into my office one minute before church starts wanting to talk about a crisis in his or her life.

I have cancelled overseas mission trips just days before departure, and I have made urgent trips with only a few days notice. In Slovakia our schedule frequently changes because of long prayer meetings, or visits in Gypsy homes that run late into the night. Recently, our vicar delayed the start of his vacation for several hours while he helped some desperate Burmese men find jobs. I think you get the picture of how schedules can seem disorderly, chaotic

and disorganized when doing mission work.

The messiness of missions is nothing new. In Acts 6 we see how things got a little disorderly in the early church when, ***"Greek-speaking Jews claimed that the widows among them were neglected every day when food and other assistance was distributed."*** (v. 1)

The church had a bit of a mess on their hands. But God blessed their mess. The apostles appointed Stephen and other Greek men to help them with administration. It wasn't that they didn't want to help distribute food or wait on tables. They just didn't want to neglect their call to pray and serve in ways related to God's Word.

It was people who made the "mess". The early church was learning how to deal with Greeks and other Gentiles. Before then they had only the Jewish people to contend with. Their answer was to use lay-people to help with administration and to multiply the workers. After they did this we learn that, ***"The Word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples in***

Jerusalem grew very large." (Acts 6:7)

At New Life, we wouldn't have so many messes if there were no Burmese in our service, or if we didn't try to reach out to Gypsies who happen to be scattered all over the world. But if we intend to do missions, we should expect things to be messy. In fact, if they aren't messy, we should be suspicious that we aren't reaching out or growing like we should.

I am happy that God has given us a gifted layman to help with administration and many other members who share their gifts so that the Word of God can continue to spread and the number of disciples around the world, and in many people groups, may grow very large.

*God bless you
Pastor Larry*

"...Choose seven men whom the people know are spiritually wise. We will put them in charge of this problem...The Word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew very large." (Acts 6:5,7)

Mess—Yes or No?

By Mark Lange



...if you are working the mission field and you are not creating messes, then you are probably not being very effective.

Mission work is messy work! You have to be creative. Willing to try new things, in new ways. Take risks. Some things will be successful, some won't. You learn from your mistakes and go forward. Some would say that if you are working the mission field and you are not creating messes, then you are probably not being very effective.

In stark contrast to this is the command that the Master gives us for taking care of His creation. He tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful". This applies to us as individuals as well as a congregation here at New Life.

The Lord wants us to do anything but create a mess with the resources he has given us.

The Greek word for steward is "oikonomos" which can be translated into three English words: manager, overseer or supervisor. In biblical times a steward was a position of great authority. He was under the direct control of the master. In today's society, a manager or supervisor is one of great authority in the workplace. Much is expected of them. They are directly held accountable for the company's resources (which really come from the Lord also).

In both cases, if the

"steward" is faithful in taking care of the "Master's" possessions they are rewarded with additional responsibility and opportunity. This should challenge all of us to do the very best we can with what the Lord has entrusted to us.

Our goal should be to use earthly resources to lay up treasures in Heaven. In the process, we will be making many more mission messes for the Lord—so let's all make a plan to use those resources wisely.

Messy Missionaries are Effective... ...Because of an Effective Administrator

Perhaps you are wondering, "just what does an administrator do all day?" For New Life's administrator, Mark Lange, no two days are alike. As the "mission messes" vary and change, so do his activities. The main thing he does is—whatever it takes to free the missionaries to be out in the field and focused on the mission harvest. The following list gives you just a small taste of what Mark does:

- ♦ Picks up supplies
- ♦ Manages church and mission budgets
- ♦ Keeps a calendar to organize worship, bible studies, and speaking engagements
- ♦ Points our pastor/missionaries in the right direction daily
- ♦ Provides details for church board and grant reports
- ♦ Takes out the trash
- ♦ Serves as the stable anchor in the church office while others are in and out
- ♦ Changes light bulbs
- ♦ Manages our 24 hr/day member care ministry
- ♦ Answers phone calls
- ♦ Fixes copier jams
- ♦ Acknowledges contributions
- ♦ Rids buildings of ants and mice
- ♦ Proofreads all manner of documents
- ♦ Whatever no one else knows how to do or wants to do

Please pray for Mark as he cleans up the mission messes and cares for our resources

"Just what does an administrator do all day?"



Mission messes in Botswana too!

From our mission friends the Rodewalds

Sometimes things don't go as expected on the mission field in Botswana either. The Kalanga and Yeyi people wanted to take scripture portions and set them to traditional African music. Their plan was to compose music one Monday through Thursday, then record what they had done that Friday and Saturday. The first two days of composing were lost while hunting for musicians who were able to commit to the

whole week. However, by Friday the Yeyi had produced 20 songs and the Kalanga, 31. But when it came time to record, the hall where they were composing had too much traffic noise! So the Rodewalds invited everyone over to their garage, draped it with grass mats and blankets to deaden the sound, and started sweating and recording! On Friday and Saturday, their yard resounded with Yeyi and Ka-

langa music and dancing. Their neighbors enjoyed the music, no one reported them for excessive noise, and now the Yeyi and Kalanga people have Christian music in their own tradition.

Praise and thank God for taking care of mission messes around the world

Reflections and Vision

As Vicar Keller prepares for ordination we asked him to share some thoughts on his ministry

A Vicar looks back...

"You have to visit our friends, the Merinos, at the Gypsy church," These words from friends as we prepared to move to Fort Wayne, would change our lives. After eight years of teaching/directing a Lutheran preschool in California, I felt called by God to enroll at Concordia Theological Seminary to be a foreign missionary.

On our first Sunday in Fort Wayne we visited that "Gypsy" church--New Life Lutheran. That day the people of New Life were commissioning their pastor, his wife and a lay team to go to Slovakia to minister to the Gypsies. We kept coming back week after week. Mission was happening at this church!

What better place to learn about being a missionary than in a mission-focused congregation? I requested New Life as my fieldwork assignment.

Soon I found myself learning about God's mission in such diverse places as courtrooms, jails, hospitals, trailer courts and Burmese markets. The most important thing I learned is that God's mission is for everybody. At New Life, everyone is involved in seeking and saving the lost.

I learned how New Life is open to new opportunities to spread God's Word by their response to the growing Burmese population in Ft. Wayne. The leadership prayed for guidance, and the people began praying for the Burmese. God answered. First he sent a Burmese single mother and her three children. Then he sent a group of Burmese in need of a place to hold a Christmas party. Finally, God sent a Burmese Gideon who was visiting America. I was involved in these activities—hands-on experience in cross-cultural ministry!

God answered New Life's prayers for the Burmese and my wife's and my prayer for the opportunity to serve the Lord as

foreign missionaries when I received the call to be New Life's vicar and missionary to the Burmese. This past year has been one of tremendous growth and learning. The people of New Life have encouraged me to involve the Burmese in the worship service, welcomed them and prayed for them and for my family.

As I look back over the last three years at New Life, I am constantly amazed at what God can do through a small congregation that seeks His will and puts all trust in Him. God answered prayers to begin a ministry to a hidden and unreached people group, to meet the daily needs of my family and to give direction in my life.

Please pray for Jim Keller, his family and his pastoral ministry

...A Future Pastor Looks Forward

As I prepare for my ordination and installation at New Life, what will the future hold? Only God knows the answer to that question. But I can share the vision He has given me for the work at New Life. I see the development of Burmese men for leadership, in their families, community and the church. Currently we have eight men and women in Baptism class, seeking to learn more about

Jesus and faith in Him. I envision more classes like this, eventually leading to the planting of a Burmese Lutheran church.

Finally, I have a vision that one day during the worship service a man in a saffron robe will remove that robe and stand at the baptismal font, where he will be washed clean of all of his sins and made a child of God. He will replace his saffron robe with a white robe, leaving behind his life as a Buddhist monk and looking forward to his life as a

Christian, perhaps even one day as a pastor sharing with other Burmese about God's great love for them. This last vision is very personal. It is about my Burmese language teacher, who has become a very good friend. It is a vision that requires a great deal of patience and prayer. Won't you please catch this vision?

Please pray daily for this vision to become a reality.

Praise God!

**On April 24
Jim Keller
received a Call as New
Life's Assistant Pastor/
Missionary to the
Burmese**

**Ordination
June 3, 2001
10:30am**



Give thanks to God!

- ♦ **90 Burmese attended a special Easter program and Easter Egg Hunt at New Life**
- ♦ **We now have 8 Burmese attending a weekly baptism class**

WEB DEVOTIONALS USED FOR GYPSY BIBLE STUDY

Devotions from our website have now been put into booklet form, and are being used by Gypsies in California and Texas. Pastor Gary Rohwer, our mission partner in Los Angeles uses the devotions when he meets with a group of Gypsies. When Gypsies in Texas heard about this, they requested copies too.

To request a copy of the booklet use the attached envelope and write "Gypsy booklet" under comments

GYPSY MINISTRY FEATURED ON LCMS WORLD MISSION WEB SITE

New Life's Gypsy Ministry was featured in the April issue of Harvest, a publication of LCMS World Missions. Their website features pictures of the work in Slovakia, and audio interviews with Pastor Merino. You can visit their site at: www.lcmsworldmission.org

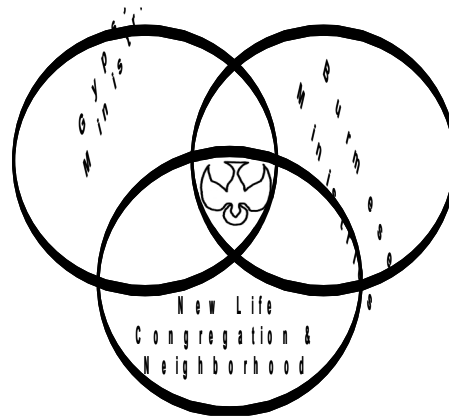
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- ♦ THE MESSINESS OF MISSIONS
- ♦ ADMINISTRATOR HELPS WITH MISSION MESSES
- ♦ MISSION MESSY IN BOTSWANA
- ♦ A WORD FROM VICAR KELLER
- ♦ BURMESE AND GYPSY MINISTRY NEWS
- ♦ EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT

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News from and for our partners in Christ

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
Luke 4:18-19



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2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
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Phone: 219.420.3024

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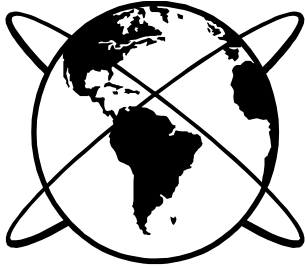


On the web at:

www.newlifeforthegypsies.org

www.newlife.in.lcms.org

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"They were from every nation,
tribe, race and language, and they
stood in front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

Keys To Sharing the Word of Christ Cross-culturally: Friendship, Kind Acceptance, & Communication

Local congregations working in the U.S. can be a vital part of God's mission to people of other cultures. My own situation is a perfect example. At age 26, after months of what seemed like an agonizing eternity I finally decided to share some secret information: I was a Christian. I had been a "closet Christian" for over a year but had kept it to myself for fear of being ostracized by my Gypsy community.

At that time an unlikely chain of events led me to Resurrection Lutheran Church, Santa Clara, CA. As I look back on that life-changing experience, I realize that Resurrection congregation did some significant things to help me. We can all learn some key points from their example of friendship, kind acceptance, and good communication.

Friendship

Christianity is so bound up with the world of the white people, that it's nearly impossible for a Gypsy to become a Christian. The Lord used the friendships of the pastor and the people at Resurrection in a mighty way to bring and keep my family and me in God's church.

After confirmation, we *were* ostracized from our family and the Gypsy community. But we were able to withstand that because we were strengthened by the friendships of the people at Resurrection.

Kind acceptance

The kind acceptance of the people at Resurrection was a big factor in helping my wife, who was a Gypsy fortuneteller at the time, to also become a Christian. Although my wife and I were *still* involved in fortunetelling, the people of the church never made us feel that we were not welcome to hear the Gospel.

We were working to get away from that evil practice, but the people were patient and kind, waiting on *God* to do *His* work through the power of the Holy Spirit. They understood "***Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.***" (Romans 10:17)

They didn't worry about the results, they just shared the Word of Christ with us. It is easier to be kind and accepting of others, when we realize whose work this really is.

Good Communication:

Their kindness also extended to the Luther's Small Catechism class, which was taught in a way that was easy to understand.

The U.S. State Department continues to send refugees and immigrants here from all over the world (currently 50 U.S. cities have been targeted) As we work across cultures it is increasingly important that we communicate the message of the Gospel in simple, easy-to-

understand ways.

Try to imagine what it would be like not understanding a simple term like, say, "forgiveness". For Christians this is foundational to our faith, but for people who did not grow up in Christian homes (Gypsies like me), the concept seems foreign at best. Couple that with the language barrier, and you have a communication disaster waiting to happen. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you a willingness and the words to tell the Good News in clear, easy to grasp language.

Over 20 years ago the Lord rescued me from the pit of unbelief. I hope and pray that all of you and your congregations will pray for God's power to reach out to those from other cultures, recognizing that kind acceptance, communication and friendship are important keys in doing so.

God bless you,
Pastor Larry



F R I E N D S H I P

120 Burmese attend ordination / installation

June 3 was a special day for New Life. We had our worship outside under a big tent that morning--because our little building couldn't hold the crowd that came for the service of ordination and installation of Jim Keller as assistant pastor and missionary to the Burmese people. Our usual crowd of 100 grew to 300 people, 120 of whom were Burmese!

Four Burmese men read bible verses and a Burmese choir sang two beautiful hymns in their language. The entire

rite of ordination was translated into Burmese, and soon-to-be Pastor Keller responded to the vows both in Burmese and English.

A few of the Burmese who came are Christians. Some who came are very curious about Christianity and have been attending worship services at New Life every week. Others are Buddhists, but they came because of their friendship with the Kellers.

We praise God that in just one year our outreach among the Burmese has grown from

one family attending worship to a growing group of weekly worshippers.

Your prayers have been key to this growth, and we thank you for them.

You can see pictures of the ordination /installation service on our website @ www.newlife.in.lcms.org

Food Stamps in the Offering by Pastor Jim Keller

Recently, someone put \$3 in food stamps into our Sunday offering plate. This is not all that unusual for a small poor congregation like ours. In this case, I knew that these were truly a "Widow's Mites", a grateful gift from Tu, a young Burmese refugee woman.

Tu, her husband and two small boys came to Fort Wayne this past summer from Thailand. Tu became a Christian shortly after coming to America, but her husband Ne remained a staunch Buddhist. Ne was not very happy about his wife's new religion and tried very hard to find reasons for her not to attend church. He would let her attend but she was only allowed to bring their youngest son. The oldest son was designated to be a good Buddhist.

One day Ne asked me for help. He had been laid off and all of his benefits were coming to an end. He was in great need of a job. I took Ne and 8 other Burmese men to a new plastics factory run by Christians. The president of this factory was very impressed with the Burmese and immediately hired two men to start that day. Ne was not one

of them and he left very dejected.

I assured Ne that the president would be calling me soon to hire more Burmese and that he would be among those hired. Later in the day, I received a call that they wanted to hire two more Burmese to start 3rd shift that day. Ne again was not one of them.

A few days later Ne called to tell me how depressed he was and again asked for my help. I went to his apartment and assured him that New Life would not let his family become homeless. I told him that I was praying to Jesus about his job situation. He smiled at me as if to say, "That will do no good because I am a Buddhist." As I left I looked him in the eye and said, "Jesus will take care of you, you will see!"

The next day the factory called to say that Ne was to start work on 3rd shift that night! I met with him the next day to help him fill out his paperwork. As we finished up, I said to him, "Ne, your wife Tu prays to Jesus." "Yes," he answered. "She likes to come to church," I continued. "She wants to be baptized. Baptism is when Jesus puts his name on her and she becomes his child.

I would like to teach her more about Jesus and also about Baptism. But I will not do this unless you give me permission to teach her because you are her husband and the boss of this house." I waited, heart pounding. "Will you give me permission to teach Tu after church on Sundays?" "Yes, you can teach her," he replied. That next Sunday Tu and both her boys came to church! Tu was so happy to be able to come to church and learn of Jesus and baptism that she gave what she had, \$3 in food stamps, to say thank you to Jesus for her husband's job and his permission to attend church.

Please pray for Ne and Tu and for all the Burmese people who are coming to New Life that "Faith will come from hearing the Word of Christ."

C O M M U N I C A T I O N



Friendship- Hearing the Message

by Jeanne Burger

Dzamelja is a Bosnian Muslim woman who lives in the Centlivre Apartments. When I first met Dzamelja last Fall, she hid her face from me, because she had few teeth and her mouth was sunken in. Her parents had never repaired her cleft palate as a child, and just when she could have taken care of this as an adult, war broke out in her country.

Dzamelja was reluctant to come out of her apartment because of past ridicule about her face. But as the volunteer missionaries at Centlivre built friendships with Dzamelja, a change came over her. She began to visit our Friendship Center more often, to practice her English and visit her new friends. In time, she quit covering her face and began to smile.

When Dzamelja's baby was hospitalized, we helped the parents to communicate with the doctors. Later, we worked with some doctors to determine what could be done to correct Dzamelja's mouth, teeth and face.

Our friendship with Dzamelja, and her husband and four children grew. They told us about the war, about being shot at by neighbors, seeing their house destroyed, then fleeing for their lives. We shared pictures of our families, drank

their thick Bosnian coffee and ate huge slices of delicious bread. Dzamelja took great pride in cooking for us.

We asked about their Muslim beliefs and practices and learned that it was "Christian" neighbors who had fought against them. Because of our friendship, they saw Christians who helped people and they were willing to listen when we shared stories from the bible. Dzamelja especially liked stories of how Jesus healed people, and she welcomed our prayers to "Bog" (God) for her.

One day Dzamelja asked me about our hospitals. I explained that most hospitals in this country were started by Christians, who wanted to help people because Jesus had done so much to help them. When she told me she had seen something on television about Jesus I asked her if she would like to know more about him, and she quickly answered "Yes!" I asked her husband for permission to bring a video about Jesus the next time I came and he said that I could.

As Dzamelja and her husband watched the video Jesus in the Bosnian language, Dzamelja gasped at each miracle. When she saw Jesus between the two

thieves, she said, "They were bad but Jesus was good." She held her breath when they nailed Jesus to the cross, and she leaned towards the screen during the Easter morning scene, as if she wanted to examine the empty tomb for herself. Afterwards Dzamelja said, "I have never heard this story before. All Bosnian people should see this." We left the video with them and they have watched it several more times.

We don't know what will happen in their hearts now with the message they have heard. But we do know that Dzamelja and her husband were willing to listen to the Word of God because of our friendship with them.

Please pray for Dzamelja and her family and for people from 23 nations who live at Centlivre, that "Faith will come from hearing the Word of Christ."

Faith gained - Faith shared

Recently Doreen Uwanawich wrote from Los Angeles, "*I am praying to the Lord to make me more compassionate by his grace about reaching Gypsies and sharing our Father's endless and boundless grace with them.*"

Doreen understands. She was a Gypsy fortuneteller who found faith when she heard the Word of Christ. And she found the courage to face the rejection of her family and the Gypsy community by talking with her cousin, Pastor Larry Merino and his wife Linda who had been through the same experience.

Pastor Merino introduced Doreen to Pastor Gary Rohwer, a

Lutheran pastor of an international church in northern Los Angeles County. Gary and his wife Grace and their children Anna, Amy, Rachael, and Nathan befriended Doreen, encouraged her in the Word of God, and became like family to her.

Today Doreen is a powerful witness to her own family and people. She is spreading the message of Jesus Christ among them in a way no outsider to the culture could. For example, recently she has been encouraging a Gypsy mother whose 6-year-old daughter died. The mother had expressed faith in Jesus, but that faith was shaken by the

death. Doreen knows the pressures of the Gypsy community, and the best ways to comfort the mother.

Pastor Merino consults with Pastor Rohwer frequently by phone. And occasionally he visits in person by traveling to California as a part of New Life's commitment to reach out to the Gypsy people.

Please pray for Doreen and Pastor Rohwer - and that for many Gypsies, Faith will come from hearing the Word of Christ."

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New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone: 219.420.3024

Fax: 219.422.9180

Email: jmburgr@aol.com

New Life In Mission:
One Congregation
Many missions



On the web at:

www.newlifeforthegypsies.org

www.newlife.in.lcms.org

INSIDE:

Keys To Sharing the Word of Christ Cross-culturally:

- ♦ Friendship
- ♦ Kind Acceptance &
- ♦ Communication



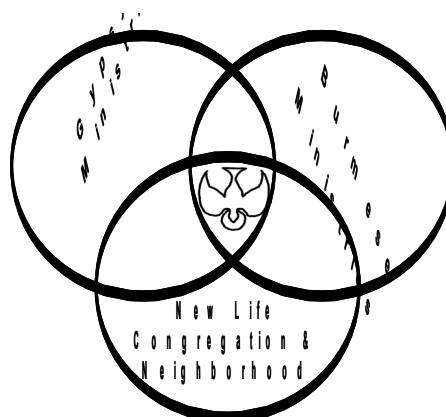
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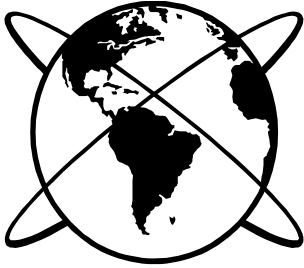
NEW LIFE MISSION CONNECTIONS

News from and for our partners in Christ

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:18-19





"They were from every nation,
tribe, race and language, and they
stood in front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9

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New Life Mission Connections

Building Cross-Cultural Christian Community

The greatest joy I have experienced over the years as a missionary pastor are the times I have seen God use people's capacities, contributions and hospitalities to build Christian community. I am especially excited when I see this happening cross-culturally.

CAPACITIES What We Can Do

When our church started in 1990 we had a number of new converts who could hardly read. And yet it was these same converts who were able to tell the simple story of Jesus' work on the cross to their families and friends. God used these committed new believers to help our church grow and reach out to people in Slovakia and other parts of the world.

Newborn babies can't do much for others, and yet it is often little babies who are the best evangelists on the day of their baptism. Many unchurched relatives and friends come to church on that day to help celebrate the joyous occasion. As they hear the Good news they can be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many people at our church have come to faith through the witness of a newborn baby. Recently our church did a door to door canvass with another church in our area.

One of our new converts teamed up with a local pastor and hit the streets. Later that day as we gave our reports the pastor said, "This woman is an evangelist!" She had only been at our church a short while but her capacity to tell the story to strangers was clear to everyone. Since then she has reached out to many unchurched people and brought them to church. Christian communities get built when we do what we can—then God does what we can't.

CONTRIBUTIONS What We Can Give

It is interesting to note that the great miracles of the Bible always used something that someone ALREADY had. For example, when Elijah fed the widow he asked, "What do you have in the house?" Jesus used what the people had: a little boy's lunch, some water, some mud, (made from the spit in his mouth) to mention a few. What can community building Christians learn from this? God does his greatest miracles using what we HAVE, not what we don't have. We build Christian communities when we give what we can—then God gives what we can't.

HOSPITALITIES Expressing Our Friendship

I should have our elder tell you the story about the time he and my brother-in-law and I all slept in the same bed in a Gypsy village in Eastern Slovakia. He says he didn't sleep too well that night because of my snoring. Anyway, what I remember was how poor these people were in comparison to American standards. And yet, this Gypsy family slept on the floor in the living room, while we slept in their bed. But that's not all. Since my Slovak was very rusty and their English was non-existent, there was a communication barrier to overcome. But their hospitality to us spoke volumes. Our friendship in Christ is evident yet today. Working across cultures means we express what we can—and let Jesus express what we can't.

I hope that you, too, will experience joy as you see God use people's capacities, contributions and hospitalities to build cross-cultural Christian community.

God bless you
Pastor Larry

Hospitalities

Working across cultures means we express what we can—and let Jesus express what we can't.

Transformed

by Pastor Larry Merino

Not long ago I had a chance to visit our Indiana District mission site in the All Nations Friendship Center at the Centlivre Village Apartments for an Ice Cream Social the volunteer missionaries were hosting for the families who regularly visit at the Center. What a change from a year ago when this mission started!

A year ago as I walked over the apartment grounds, people seemed so lost, depressed and alone. It was such a dismal place. But that night at the party there were people from many countries gathered together and mingling with each other... people from Bosnia, Burma, Sudan and Chad, just to name a few.

The Internationals and the volunteers were sharing little pieces of their lives with each other in ways that told me our volunteer missionaries have been building meaningful relationships with these people from many nations. I was especially excited to see the ways the missionaries have been building a sense of community with and among the people, because this will have great long-term benefits for their lives and for the sake of the gospel. Young people were sitting beside older Americans—who fill a huge gap in their lives, people who used to be isolated in their apartments were enjoying one

another, and the room was filled with laughter as some of the guests helped scoop the ice cream, served toppings, and shared hospitalities with us.

Most of these people who follow Muslim or Buddhist beliefs would have had little chance of hearing the message of Jesus Christ in their homelands. But there they were, rubbing shoulders with their Christian friends, the Centlivre volunteer missionaries. The place had been transformed, by the grace of God.

Praise God for this growth in cross-cultural community at Centlivre.

Tell Me Again...

by Pete Meneghello

New Life members Pete and Tammy Meneghello spent a week in Los Angeles visiting our mission partners Rev. Gary and Grace Rohwer. The Meneghello's met and worshiped with the members of Pastor Rohwer's church, whose members are a mix of white, Persian (Iranian) and Gypsy people, and they helped with the church's Vacation Bible School.

Helping with a Vacation Bible School (VBS) that included Gypsy and Persian children was a very meaningful experience for my wife and me. One 12-year-old Persian boy, Faried, was particularly memorable. Faried was a loving child from a family of former Muslim's who now attend Good News For All Nations Lutheran Church. Faried and his family have only been Christians for a short time, so hearing about Jesus was very new to him.

On the third day, of VBS the memory verse was Matthew 1:21, ***"She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus, be-***

cause he will save his people from their sins."

Faried asked me repeatedly about the memory verse during the day. In a van on the way to the ocean, he leaned forward and said "Pete, tell me again what that verse for today was about...about Jesus taking away our sins?" I read the verse to him and he repeated it back to me word for word with great care, as if he had just found a great treasure—which he had! He was very excited to hear about Jesus being born of a woman to save us, and he shared that verse for memory with great excitement before the entire congregation the next Sunday. It brought tears to my eyes to see how precious those words were to him.

Faried's excitement was a good reminder to me to take a fresh look at a familiar verse, and to capture some of the same wonder and joy that he

felt when grasping it for the first time. The subject of this powerful verse comes out of a dream given to Joseph.

Joseph wanted to do the right thing before God and for his wife to be, Mary. When he found out that Mary was "with child" he felt the need to separate from her. But then an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream and gave Joseph these wonderful words of comfort and of hope. In these few words the angel told Joseph that he would do the right thing by staying with Mary and being involved in this child's life.

Joseph would have the privilege of naming Jesus, and eventually Jesus would take away Joseph's sins! The angel gave Joseph hope for the future. And now, 2000 years later, those same words gave hope to a Persian boy in California, to me, and I hope to all who read this as well.

Thank you for your prayers which are strengthening the Community of Gypsy and Persian believers in California

Capacities

Christian communities get built when we do what we can—then God does what we can't.

Burmese community and leadership growth evident at Labor Day Picnic

Last year at New Life's first Labor Day Picnic for the Burmese only a dozen people from 5 families were brave enough to venture to Camp Lutherhaven for the day. All of the arrangements and efforts at that time were by members of New Life.

A few weeks ago, there were over 80 Burmese, from 20 families who met at Camp Lutherhaven for a day of boating, volleyball, soccer, fellowship and lots of delicious Burmese food.

This year the Burmese people were more involved with the arrangements, and several of the Burmese men took on much of the leadership. What a difference a year makes!

Thank you for your prayers which have helped make this difference. Because of your prayers we are seeing God use the Burmese people's capacities to build community.

We hope you enjoy the complimentary note card included with this mailing. This card is just one of four different cards designed and written by members of New Life to help raise funds for our mission work.

Additional cards are available through the church at:

4 for \$5

12 for \$12

Contact us for bulk discounts

All proceeds from the cards will be used directly to fund mission work.

Contributions

We build Christian communities when we give what we can—then God gives what we can't.

Where Can They Turn?

Building Community to Prevent Refugee Homelessness

Where can they turn? That is a question that the staff at New Life has been facing for several months as we have become increasingly aware of the number of Burmese refugees who are on the brink of homelessness. Hlaing, his wife Zar and daughter Tu are an example of one of these families.

This family was settled in Kentucky as Refugees. Hearing of the growing Burmese Refugee population in Fort Wayne, they moved to Centlivre Village Apartments. Unfortunately, at the time of their move, the economy took a downturn and Hlaing was unable to find work. Zar was able to find part time work as a waitress but soon had to give up this job due to complications with her pregnancy. Zar underwent an emergency c-section to save the life of their unborn son just when their Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits were ending. Thet was born weighing only 3 lbs. Hlaing spent

his days caring for Tu and worrying about Zar and young Thet.

Now both Zar and Thet are home from the hospital, but Hlaing still has no job and cannot pay rent. He is already faced with owing money to friends who have lent him money to pay for rent, utilities and other necessities. Now Zar faces either going further into debt, or possible eviction if he falls too far behind in his rent. He struggles to pay the utilities, care for his wife and two children and look for work. He worries about his family's future. He has exhausted all governmental aid to pay the bills and his friends cannot continue to pay their rent and his. Where can he turn?

The staff and members of New Life are currently developing both short-term and long-term solutions to this problem of

refugees on the brink of homelessness. We will be using the shelter we already have to house some of the refugees. We also plan to use this home as a place to build community among the Burmese and other Internationals that will enable them to overcome barriers to obtaining secure jobs, and to live interdependently with each other rather than dependently on the social service system. Much of this community building will be done through their involvement with the members at New Life.

Please pray for us as we move forward and develop these ideas. Pray that God will guide us and open our eyes to the resources that will help us build community, prevent refugee homelessness, and give us opportunities to share the love of Jesus Christ.

Cross-cultural Communities

God does his greatest miracles using what we HAVE, not what we don't have.

New Life Lutheran Church

2424 S. Coliseum Blvd
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
USA

Phone: 219.420.3024

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INSIDE:

**Building
Cross-cultural
Christian
Community**

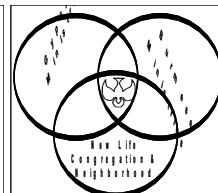
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Luke 4:18-19



New Life Lutheran Church is hosting the:

First International Gypsy Summit
The Future of the Gypsies: Jesus Christ
October 22-24, 2001

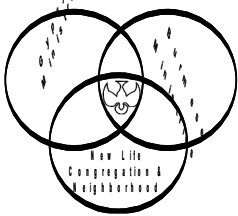
Special presentation
Wednesday, October 24, 7pm

Supper @ 6pm

If you are in the area please join us and
meet our International guests



“They were from every nation,
tribe, race and language, and
they stood in front of the
throne.”
Rev. 7:9



New Life Lutheran Church Ft. Wayne, Indiana

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New Life Mission Connections

How To Do Mission Work

A lot of people would start doing mission work if they only had the answer to one question—How do you do mission work? Since I have had the opportunity to do some mission work, and also to talk with many missionaries about their work, I would be happy to give you the best possible answer to this question. Here it is:
We don't know!

We don't know how—but we know *Someone* who does

It is wonderfully liberating when you realize that no one really knows how to do mission work. There are certain mission principles that should be used, but apart from that, I have not met any missionaries in any setting who really felt they knew what they were doing. However, I have noticed that the most successful ones understand one important point: It's not their mission, it's *God's mission!* Missionaries who recognize this always have a deep reliance on the Holy Spirit in all they do regarding God's mission. They know that God knows how to do it best. He will use us human beings, as incapable as we are, to do His work. But we are the *stewards* not the *owners* of the mission.

Try something

Not knowing what to do can feel very uncomfortable. Even St. Paul didn't always know what to do or where to go, but he didn't let that stop him. He described this once by saying that he was “*perplexed but not in despair*” (2 Cor. 4:12) In the original lan-

guage you can also translate it this way: “I don't know what to do, but I am not afraid to try something.”

In Acts 16 we read how Paul and his companions traveled from place to place until Paul saw the vision of the man from Macedonia saying, “*Come over to Macedonia and help us.*” Paul constantly believed that the power of the Holy Spirit would guide him. We may not know what to do, but if we are not afraid to try something, the Lord will guide our efforts and use them to seek and save lost people.

Pray for a specific people group.

Many churches truly mean it when they say, “We want to do missions!” But then nothing happens. I believe the biggest reason for this is that their statement is too vague. Churches that reach out across cultures say something like this, “We want our church to reach out to the Hispanic immigrants working at the local meat packing plant.” This way they can pray *specifically—by name* for these people.

It is not a coincidence that Gypsies and Burmese are the two main unreached people groups we work with. We have prayed for these groups *specifically—by name*. Our prayers for the Gypsies began over 20 years ago when I became a Christian. Our work among the Burmese began about three years ago when several of our members and Pastor Keller, who was a semi-

nary student doing field work at our church at the time, began to pray *specifically—by name* for the Burmese people.

Your first prayer may be to ask God to reveal the people group He wants to reach through you.

(For a list of unreached people groups, contact LC-MS World Mission @: 1.800.433.3954)

Don't go it alone

Even if your church is big you will still need to partner with other agencies and congregations. Jesus said it is not good to be alone and sent the disciples out in pairs.

We value the partnerships we have with those of you who receive our Mission Connections newsletter. Your prayers and support encourage us to keep on doing mission work, even if we don't know what we are doing! I am glad you understand, after all, that it is God's Mission.

I am praying for you,

Pastor Larry

How To Do Mission Work? The Power of Presence

by Pastor Jim Keller

How do you do mission work?

Successful missionaries understand it's not their mission, it's God's mission!

I'll let you in on a little missionary secret: one of the best ways to be a missionary is simply just being there. Your presence is a powerful thing. Even if you do not know what to do or say, just being with someone says a lot. When people know Whom you represent (Jesus), they also know Who is present with you.

Many of you have been praying for Tu and her husband Ne. Tu is a Burmese woman who was so thankful that her husband let her and her youngest son come to church, even though he wouldn't join them, that she put foodstamps in the offering basket. The Lord has been using presence to answer those prayers.

I was present with Ne when he needed a job. Later, Ne requested my presence when he had to go to traffic court. The Lord used these situations to open a door to our relationship. Then Tu became pregnant, and between working all day at her sewing job and caring for her two active sons, she became too tired on Sunday mornings to come to church—so Ne came in her place and often brought both boys! When I asked Ne about Jesus, he said that he “was still learning.” As Tu's pregnancy advanced, she began to feel better, and the whole family would come to church!

One day Ne again asked for my presence; this time it was at the hospital after Tu went into labor—to interpret! No, my Burmese is not that good—yet—but God does provide. I arranged for an older Burmese Christian woman to interpret when it came time for the actual delivery. Auntie W. did a marvelous job, and Tu delivered a beautiful, healthy baby

girl! This time my presence allowed me to bless this child and her parents by reading 1 Sam. 2:1-2.

Auntie W. interpreted as I explained that “a woman named Hannah prayed this prayer as a thank you to God for answering her prayer for a baby. Just as you, Tu, have been praying that your baby would be a girl, now you can use this prayer as a thank you to God. Hannah's baby grew up to be a great leader of her people and taught them about God. I believe that when your daughter grows up she too will be a great leader of her people and will teach them about God.”

When I looked at Ne, he was grinning from ear to ear. So I went on to say, “Ne and Tu, because your parents live in Burma, this little girl needs a Burmese grandmother here, so Auntie W. will be that Burmese Grandmother.” Auntie W. agreed to do this as well as to pray every day for the child and to help Tu raise her daughter.

Thank God for blessing our presence with His presence. Ne is not a Christian yet, but now he has a daughter dedicated to the Lord. This little girl, who has a special place in her daddy's heart, can reach her daddy with the Gospel in a way that I cannot. And best of all, her presence will always be a reminder to her family, and to us, of the loving God who answers prayers.

How To Do Mission Work? Try Something!

by Jeanne Burger

How do you do mission work?

We may not know what to do, but we are not afraid to try something!

How can we reach the Bosnian families living at the Centlivre Village Apartments? This was a question we had been asking for a year. It had been difficult to build friendships with these Muslim people who had many fears, and much hatred as a result of the war in their country.

Then Anna asked us to try something. Her musical talents had attracted the interest of some of the young Bosnian girls living at Centlivre and she wanted to help them present a “Friendship Show”. Anna was able to talk more easily to the Bosnian people, because she is from Slovakia, and her language is similar to theirs. Anna believed that God could use the talents He had given her to help us reach the Bosnian people. We decided to try the show.

For many weeks, as the children rehearsed, we prayed that God would bless this opportunity. Sometimes those rehearsals were difficult, because the children would argue and hurt each other's feelings. But Anna kept trying and we all kept praying.

We were excited when a large crowd of parents and volunteers showed up and crowded into the small Party Room to watch the Friendship Show. During the show Anna told the adults in the audi-

ence, “The children needed to learn to cooperate and to forgive each other, in order to make this show. You see what a beautiful job they did. Now, I am asking you to do the same thing. Start a new life here. Forgive each other. Thank you.” As Anna moved towards the piano to play a song, one of the fathers in the crowd said, “No, thank you, Anna, for saying that.”

After the show some of the parents formed a circle and began to dance to some Bosnian music that was playing. They laughed and enjoyed being together—something that many of them have not done since before the war in their homeland.

Thank God for guiding our “try”. In the weeks since the Friendship Show, many of the Bosnian people have been asking questions about forgiveness. This will open a door for us to tell them about forgiveness in Jesus.

First International Gypsy Summit

Mission Workers Learn They Are Not Alone In Their Work

The First International Gypsy Summit, held October 22-24, 2001, brought together missionaries to the Gypsies, and various Gypsy mission partners from Slovakia, California, St. Louis and Ft. Wayne. The staff of New Life hosted this historic event.

Those who attended the conference had many formal opportunities to discuss the ways that culture and tradition affect the reception of the Gospel among the Gypsies. The discussion revealed both similarities and differences among Gypsies around the world. For example, Pastor Gary Rohwer reported that most of the Gypsies he works with in California are involved in fortune telling, while this is not true among Gypsies in Slovakia.

Time for more informal meetings was also an important part of the Summit. During quiet conversations in small groups or one-on-one, participants were able to get to know each other better, share concerns or ideas, and strengthen one another.

When the Summit began Gustav Gaspar, a Gypsy lay-leader from Slovakia, _____ and Pastor John Riste, _____

"Work among the Gypsy people is often slow and difficult, so I believe it is important that the participants were able to encourage one another. Everyone left with a new vision for the work among Gypsies around the world."

Pastor Larry Merino

a Gypsy pastor from California were strangers. However, they quickly built a relationship based on their common Gypsy heritage and their connection as brothers in Christ. Pastor Larry Merino joined them for some good heart-to-heart talks just between the three Gypsy men.

Another special moment came when Viola Fronkova, Pastor Hans-Martin Dern and Sandra Dern were sharing pictures of the Gypsy people in Slovakia. Moved by their stories about the physical and spiritual poverty of those Gypsies, Pastor John gently placed his hand on the pictures and led the group in a prayer for his fellow Gypsies on the other side of the ocean.

It wasn't all work and no play, however. The gathering was held at Camp Lutherhaven, a beautiful camping and retreat center near Ft. Wayne, where the Fall trees and plenty of sunshine provided a wonderful setting for

Keys to the Summit's success:

Guitars, S'mores, eggrolls and lots of laughter!

all sorts of activities _____ such as hiking, picture taking and evening devotions.

It wouldn't have been a Gypsy Summit without the guitar music that is familiar to Gypsies around the world! So there was lots of guitar playing and singing, especially around the campfire.

Other more lighthearted moments included watching some of our friends from Slovakia eat S'mores for the



The Future of the Gypsies: Jesus Christ was the Summit theme. Participating missionaries included: (L to R) Candy Riste, Linda Merino, Gustav Gaspar, Pastor Hans-Martin Dern, Pastor John Riste, Pastor Larry Merino, Viola Fronkova, Sandra Dern (not pictured: Gary Rohwer)

first time and enjoying the egg rolls that were provided by New Life's Burmese ministry. It seemed impossible for the missionaries to eat and sing together without the addition of lots of laughter.

Both the learning and the laughter spilled over into the closing program, held at New Life Lutheran Church. Guests from Kentucky, northwest Indiana, and the Ft. Wayne area heard the Gypsy missionaries tell how God is at work among the Gypsy people in Slovakia and the United States, and they were treated to sev- _____ eral of the rousing

"Prepare wholeheartedly for good things as we work together to reach the half million Gypsies in Slovakia for Jesus Christ."

Viola Fronkova, Slovakia

Gypsy songs that are sung at evangelistic rallies in Slovakia.

Everyone involved was very excited about the success of the Summit, and they are already dreaming about the next gathering.

Thank God for the joyful success of the Gypsy Summit, for all that was learned and that it helped the Gypsy missionaries to know that they aren't alone in their work.

How do you do mission work?

Don't go it alone.
We value the prayers and support of our partners.

How do you do mission work?

We may not know what we are doing—but we know Someone who does

How do you do mission work?

Pray for a specific people group

There are approximately 11 million Gypsies in the world today. Over 6 million live in Europe, and around 1 million in North America. The remainder is dispersed throughout India, South America and Asia.

How can you do mission work?

We want to help you with your goals for God's mission

It's Not our Mission, It's God's Mission! Gustav Gaspar's Testimony

At the Gypsy Summit, Gustav Gaspar, a Gypsy elder from the Slovakian Gypsy Mission Team, shared the following story of how he became a Christian. He was eager for us to share it with our Mission Connections readers as well.

After democracy arrived in my country and communism disappeared, the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) used to enter people's houses and talk to them and visit them. During communism it was secret, because they were persecuted as well as Christians. One day they came also to my house. I had heard something about Jehovah's Witnesses, but I had never experienced talking with them. I had no idea what it meant to be one.

My father was always talking about God. He was very spiritual. It was in my heart as well. So I thought those people who came and were talking about God were the right people. So I became a part of them, and I was studying their bible for one year. I was very enthusiastic about studying their bible and about learning what these people were talking about.

One day, my older daughter went to baptize her child and she received a bible from pastor's wife. My daughter came to my house, gave me the bible and told me, "Dad, if you want to learn so much about God, this is bible for you." And that's the way I came to read our bible.

I was a person without a teacher to lead me in what to study. So I started to read our bible from the beginning to the end, and I did that several times.

Those men were preparing me for JW's baptism. But I had read in the bible something different, and I was confused. I didn't understand how these people could talk something different from bible, and I didn't know where is truth. But I was a man who couldn't have advice from somebody around. The JW's would come and have a bible study in my kitchen around the table. So one day I told them, "I will go outside for awhile, and then I will come back and tell you something."

Behind our house there is a garden. I went into the garden and I started to pray, "God, you see, I don't know where to go. Where is my path? Please help me know what I should do, and the way where

I should go."

I can't explain how it could happen, but I started to cry. And I went back to my house and those people, and told them, "Brothers, I don't want to be a part of you anymore."

Before this time, I was not the kind of person who is able to tell somebody what I really thought. But during the time I was praying to Lord, He gave me, through the Holy Spirit, the strength to tell to those people that I didn't want to be with them anymore.

Afterwards, for the next couple of days, I was alone. During that time I was reading the bible all the time. I was able to read the bible during the night. I was able to wake up with the bible—it was always in my head. From that time I didn't know any other book except the bible.

The Lord sent me a teacher because God gave us missionaries. So they go and they share gospel, and they came also to my house. Hans-Martin Dern came to my house. I am very thankful to the Lord that he sent Hans to me. So, we were sitting together and he was teaching me, and he also taught all my family.

Thank God that He uses men like Pastor Hans-Martin Dern in His mission—to teach men like Gustav. Pray for Gustav as he goes now as a missionary to his own Gypsy people.



Gustav Gaspar told partners at the Gypsy Summit, "thanks from the bottom of my heart, for sending brothers to teach me God's Word."

We're on the web at:

www.newlife.in.lcms.org



Contact us at:

New Life Lutheran Church
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 46803
USA

Phone: 260.420.3024
Fax: 260.422.9180
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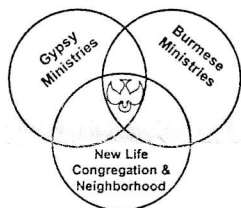
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May, 2002



"They were from every nation,
tribe, race and language, and
they stood in front of the
throne."
Rev. 7:9



New Life Lutheran Church Ft. Wayne, Indiana

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New Life Mission Connections

THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF MISSION WORK

Meeting real needs

Through trial, error and experience missionaries will usually learn a few things that are quite helpful to them in sharing the gospel. In the same way, we also learn what kinds of things can get in the way of our work.

Please understand that I am not against people having things and I am not against making sure people are clothed and well fed with the care described in Matthew 25.

We spend a lot of time in our work at New Life finding out what people's real needs are and helping them meet these needs.

The most *common* need people have is the need to be in *community*. Every person was created to be in a relationship to other human beings. (Gen. 2) As Christians we can offer our friendship. As we offer our lives, we will also find that ultimately people really wanted our friendship more than they wanted things.

That is why we are so thankful to you, our partners in this ministry, because you understand that we need your friendship and prayers and support.

Making a commitment

One thing I have noticed in our work among refugees is that they value our friendship with them much more than they do the things we might give them. The truth is that such friendships require a long-term commitment, which we may be reluctant to make. But building these relationships is worth it because they offer the best opportunity for people to accept the gospel. We appreciate the fact that our partners in missions understand and support the long-term commitment we make with our Burmese friends, as well as people from many nations.

Our goal is clear: we want people to know the gospel of Jesus that brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In order to accomplish this goal, we have to be willing to invest our very lives. There is a big difference between making people targets for our evangelism efforts and building meaningful friendships, and people will be quick to spot that difference. We want to let unbelievers know that we are willing to stick with them for the long haul, and that we will be their friends even if they never become Christians.

Giving away our lives

Recently I was impressed by something an 18-year-old girl had to say about this idea. My young friend shared 1 Thessalonians 2:8 with me:

"We felt so strongly about you that we were determined to share with you not only the Good News of God but also our lives. That's how dear you were to us!"

Then she told me that this verse encouraged her to reach out to other kids at her school even if they did not respond to her witness. She said, "mission work is about more than sharing the gospel, we must share our very lives with people."

This girl is already quite a mature missionary and I think she has a pretty good idea of what Paul meant. He certainly wanted the Thessalonians to become Christian. But they had become so dear to him that he would have cared for them either way.

We are told in 2 Peter 3:9 that God is patient because he wants all people to be saved. Certainly, then, we can take the time to patiently build friendships in order to share the gospel. And I have a feeling that friends won't let their friends go hungry or naked.

Meeting Real Needs

"It is possible to give 'things' away and feel satisfied that we have met peoples' needs when we have missed their real need for friendship."

I'm Glad I Learned to Share

by Pastor Jim Keller

How is your ministry going? I hear that a lot. I must confess that I do take a sense of pride in my work. But is the ministry really mine? Is it my work? Yes and no. Yes, I do a lot of the work, but no, it is not mine to own. It belongs to the Lord.

I am glad I learned to share in kindergarten, because now I can see the importance of sharing my work. If I keep all the joy of this work to myself the outreach to the Burmese will not progress forward and I will get very tired. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he did not give it just to a small group of Christians, but to all Christians. That's why I am happy that we have a growing number of volunteers to increase the outreach and to share in the joy.

These volunteers work closely with families. As they visit in homes, take people to the doctor, tutor them or pray with them in times of need, they are sharing the love of Jesus with Burmese people. And since friendship is a two-way relationship, the volunteers also receive the care and concern of the Burmese. I am also happy to see that a number of Burmese people are now sharing in the work and helping fellow Burmese.

It can be great fun to watch others grow in their faith as they share in the joy of the work. That's why I am glad I learned to share in kindergarten. Following are some examples from our ministry with the Burmese that show how sharing the work is part of the commitment to building meaningful relationships.

Tragedy Provides Opportunity: Meeting needs, sharing the work, sharing the Gospel

On Easter morning, when a Burmese couple miscarried twin boys at five months, Pastor Keller and a member of the congregation were with the parents at the hospital. Though the parents are still Buddhists, they asked Pastor Keller to conduct the funeral services. In an effort to increase a sense of community among the Burmese, Pastor Keller invited a number of other Burmese men to stand with the father at the graveside while the mother was still recuperating. Eight men came and heard the message that Pastor Keller shared about the resurrection and our hope in Jesus.

After the service, Pastor Keller asked these men if he could count on them to continue to visit this family and help ease their burden at this difficult time. The men all indicated that they would help and appeared proud to have been asked. By sharing the work, these men gained dignity and self-confidence for leadership.

Praise God for the opportunity to share the gospel by meeting real needs and sharing the work.

Planning for Burmese Worship Sharing and working together

The members of New Life voted to start a Burmese Worship Service in June. Our current service includes Burmese Bible readings, and the Burmese people have been getting increasingly involved in the services. Now they are eager to have a service where everything is translated into their native language.

At a recent meeting to develop this service both Burmese and Americans were present and each group contributed ideas to the planning. Several Burmese stepped forward to take on various aspects of the planning and work.

At one point, after many ideas had been presented regarding the service, one person in the group turned to Pastor Keller and said, "You're the trained one here, what do you think we should do?" Pastor Keller answered, "I think that God is using many people as his instruments to further this work."

Praise God for American and Burmese people who are willing to share in the work of planning a Burmese Worship Service.

Pray that God will guide and bless this service and use it to help many Burmese people follow Jesus instead of Buddha.

Giving Away our Lives

"Mission work is about more than sharing the gospel, we must share our very lives with people."

The Other Side of Giving—Receiving!

Our ministry to the Burmese gives us many opportunities to help them and give to them. The Burmese like to give back to us as well. This helps our friendships to grow on a more even level, and therefore to grow to a deeper level.

For example, just before the Thanksgiving holiday last year, several of the Burmese invited one of our volunteers over for the holidays to make sure she wouldn't be alone at this special time.

Volunteers are blessed by the Burmese

Another Burmese man showed great concern for one of the volunteers when he saw that her tire was leaking and made sure she got that fixed.

Many times the Burmese provide some of the food for our church fellowship times—we highly recommend their "coconut noodles."

Give thanks to God for the care, concern and help that Burmese people have provided to our volunteers. Ask God to continue to develop these friendships for the sake of the Gospel.

The Gospel Changes What "Things" Didn't

A Transformation At Rudnany

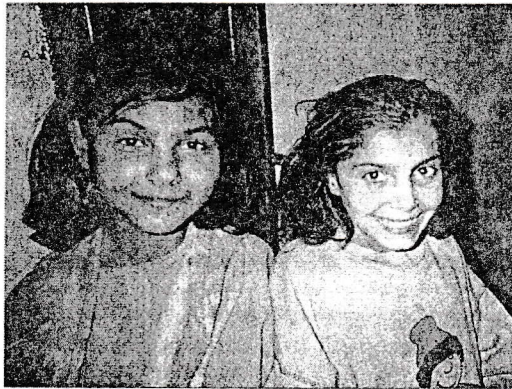
Last October Gustav Gaspar, one of the Roma (Gypsy) Elders in Slovakia shared the following with us:

"If I could tell people one thing about the work among our Roma people, it would be to stop bringing 'things' to the villages in order to build relationships. All they are doing is building dependency. What the Roma people need is the Gospel. It is the Gospel that has the power to change their lives and make them better."

This is the philosophy behind what the Roma Mission Team has been doing in the village of Rudnany. When Pastor Merino went to Slovakia in November, 2000 he visited a group of Gypsy people there who were living in terrible physical and spiritual conditions on top of an old Mercury mine. There were hundreds of Gypsies living outside on the dirt, in smoke and in the cold, with few or no clothes. The people seemed inhuman. Then Pastor Merino and the Roma team shared the gospel message, and the people showed the first sign of their humanness—they started to cry.

Many well-meaning people had come and tried to help these poor people out of their condition. People had come with food, and clothes and shelter. But none of these things brought about any change in the lives of the Gypsies at Rudnany. They sold or threw away the clothes, and continued to live in barren tents on the mines and without hope. These Gypsy people felt outcast by both men and God.

Then the Slovakian Roma Mission Team went to Rudnany. They listened to Gustav's words. They thought about the power of the Gospel to change lives. They followed Pastor Merino's advice and visited Rudnany once a month, to simply share their very lives along with the gospel message. They were supported by you, our partners, who heard about the situation and prayed. Now lives have been changed.



The care of Christians and the Gospel message bring out the smiles of Roma children in Rudnany

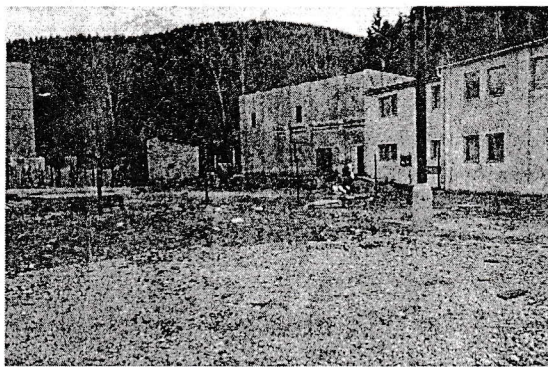
In February, when Pastor and Linda Merino visited Rudnany during a trip to Slovakia, they witnessed the dramatic change in lives. The people have moved off of the mines and into the village. Linda described what they saw on their visit; *"They had a little rally when we were there, and the children were singing Christian songs. They were beginning to have some Bible knowledge and were asking questions about the Lord Jesus. It was amazing. They were dressed nicer and they were happy, because they knew people cared about them, and that God loved them."*

Praise God for the visible change in the lives of the Roma people in Rudnany because of the Gospel.

Pray that these people will continue to learn from God's Word and grow in their faith, and that the lives of Roma people throughout the world will be transformed by the Gospel.



November 2000: Smoke surrounds Roma homes on top of an old mercury mine



February 2002: New homes and clean yards are signs of new life among the Roma people in Rudnany

Making a Commitment

"Relationships require a long-term commitment...they are worth it because they offer the best opportunity for people to accept the gospel."

Giving Away Our Lives

"What Roma people need is the Gospel... It has the power to change their lives and make them better"

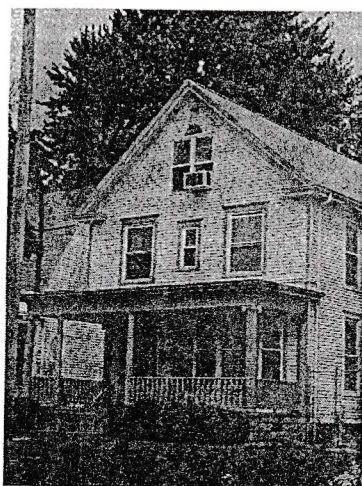
Meeting real needs—Making a commitment

"We felt so strongly about you that we were determined to share with you not only the Good News of God but also our lives. That's how dear you were to us!"

1 Thess. 2:8

Seven months ago we shared a vision with our partners to start an international housing ministry that would provide transitional housing for Burmese and other Internationals who were struggling to keep a roof over their heads. We wanted to enable these people to overcome job barriers that refugees often face and eliminate their dependence on the social service system in order to survive in this country. We also had a vision to use this ministry to build community and to create an environment where people would have the opportunity to learn about Jesus.

The Lord has blessed our initial six-month trial period and we are ready to make a long-term commitment to this ministry. English-as-a-Second Language classes, on-site tutoring, and job-development assistance are available through the home to help families or individuals gain the skills and resources they need for success. Already one family has used the home and the support it offers to move out into their own apartment.



The new managers for the International House are Burmese—Bala Kyaw Swa and his wife Tin Hla, who are living in the house along with their five children. This family has been key to the development of community among the Burmese people. The home is often full of activity as children receive tutoring, as Burmese people gather for fellowship, as they share food with those in need and as they help and encourage one another.

There have been opportunities to share about Jesus as well, some a little more surprising than others. Pastor Keller has been teaching the bible

regularly to some of the families living in the home. In addition, one of the current residents is a Buddhist monk who asked if he could live in the home because he wanted to learn more about Jesus!

Thank God for blessing this ministry and allowing us to meet real needs while sharing Jesus with Burmese people. Ask God to continue to guide and direct this ministry.

Sitting and "Being" by Jeanne Burger

One of the challenges of cross-cultural ministry is the fact that most Americans are focused on activity or "doing" something, while people from many other cultures are focused on relationships, or just "being". This can lead to some interesting and even uncomfortable moments, like the one I experienced recently when I visited an Afghani family. There are seven people in this family and usually some or all of them are home. But on this particular day, the teenagers were in school, and all of the adults were at work, except for the elderly grandmother.

My friend didn't speak a word of English, so once she had poured me several cups of tea there

was nothing more to "do". After a few minutes of silence, I was ready to leave. The silence was uncomfortable, and I thought, "I can't witness without words." But I was wrong.

My friend took my hand and just sat quietly beside me. She was so comfortable with this, and seemed so happy to have me there that eventually all sense of hurry left me. I began to enjoy just "being" with her, silently praying for her, and letting our relationship grow—without words.

"We want to let unbelievers know that we are willing to stick with them for the long haul, and that we will be their friends even if they never become Christians."

Contact us at:

New Life Lutheran Church
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 46803
USA

Phone: 260.420.3024
Fax: 260.422.9180
Email: newlifer8@aol.com

We're on the web at:

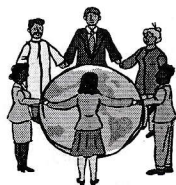
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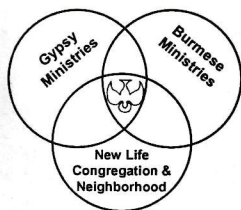
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"They were from every nation,
tribe, race and language, and
they stood in front of the
throne."
Rev. 7:9



**New Life
Lutheran Church
Ft. Wayne, Indiana**

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New Life Mission Connections

Some Plant, Some Water, God Gives The Growth

by Pastor Larry Merino

Having grown up in big cities in the West coast and small towns near the ocean, I never got the chance to know many farmers. We just didn't move in those circles. Not until my family and I moved to the Midwest to attend the seminary and be involved in the planting of New Life church in Ft. Wayne did we have the opportunity to become good friends with a number of farmers. But as our congregation has now planted a church also among the Burmese, I realize how much our lives coincide with that of some of my friends who farm.

We Plant

I don't know anything about farming, but I am pretty sure there never was a farmer who made a living at it who didn't plant seed in the ground. Without seeds, there is nothing to harvest. We church planters also plant seeds: the seed is the Word of God, and the soil is the hearts of people who need to hear that Word of forgiveness from Jesus and be saved from their sins. As we *preach* about Jesus, we also plant the Word of God in the hearts of sinners who need his forgiveness.

We Water

Again, I will admit I have never really watered crops and don't know how to do it. But I know farmers have to make sure their crops get enough water or they wither and die. We church planters also have to keep in mind that if we don't *teach* new converts, that new found faith will dry up. The Lord says that the person who knows Him is "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." (Psalm 1:3). As we *teach* new believers how to live for Him, they find that they become spiritually rich and prosperous in Jesus.

We Wait

This is the hard part. It takes a lot of patience to be a farmer. You have to wait. A lot. Wait on the Lord. And, I suppose I can say that church planting has taught me something about waiting. New believers need others to wait for them to mature. In the meantime, they need more mature Christians to come alongside and encourage them in their walk with Him. As we wait for new believers to mature, we learn to be patient. And God teaches us that, "The Lord longs to be gracious to you... Blessed are all who *wait* for Him." (Isaiah 30:18).

God Gives the Growth

Here's something even farmers don't know how to do: make the crops grow. Jesus once said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up the seed sprouts and grows though he does not know how." (Mark 4:26-27). No human being can *make* the crops grow. We can plant, and we can water, but only God can make things grow. We cannot make God's church grow either. We can plant the Word among people, and we can continue to teach them, but we trust God to grow His Church.

I admire my farming friends. They are not afraid to take a risk and rely completely on the Lord. They also remind me of the humble words of a great church planter named Paul: "*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow.*" (1 Corinthians 3:7). God's blessings to you, our partners in His mission.

You are in my prayers,
Pastor Larry

New Life Lutheran Church Celebrates 10th Anniversary – Announces Start of Burmese Worship Service

by Jeanne Burger

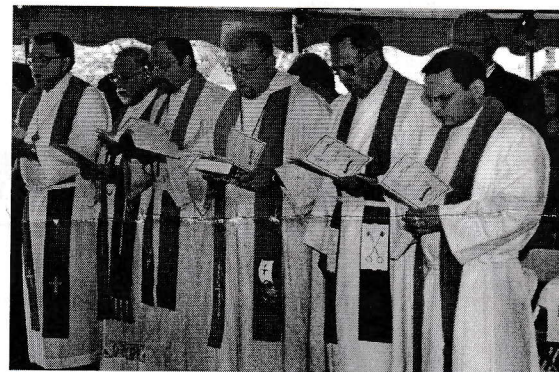
"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom will I send? Who will go for us?' I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)

"New Life was all about Jesus back then, at the beginning, and it still is all about Jesus today," Rev. Randy Duncan reminded the members of New Life and the guests who joined them on Sunday, June 2, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the congregation. Duncan was one of the church's planters and served as a vicar during its first year. Pastor Merino also helped to plant the church, and was called as pastor when New Life chartered in 1992.

Other guest speakers involved in the special worship celebration included Rev. Dr. Eugene Bunkowske, who encouraged the plant of the church as a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Rev. David Dubbelde who supported the church plant as Missions Counselor for the Indiana District, and Rev. David Schlie, who was the Pastoral Supervisor for Duncan and Merino during their vicarage years as the church was being planted.



Burmese choir singing "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" at 10th Anniversary service.



Left to right: Rev. David Dubbelde, Rev. Dr. Eugene Bunkowske, Rev. Larry Merino, Rev. Randy Duncan, Rev. David Schlie and Rev. James Keller

Each speaker shared a brief message on a different section of New Life's Mission Statement, including: "Guided by the Word," "We Seek the Lost," "By Telling of Christ," "Serving Needs" and "Accepting All People". Rev. Schlie told the anniversary crowd of a time in the early days when Pastor Merino came and asked him for help in knowing how to run the fledgling church. "Do you remember what I told you?" Schlie said, looking at Pastor Merino. "I told you I couldn't help you. I

still can't help you. It was the Holy Spirit who planted this church, and He is the only one who can help you lead this church." New Life's outreach to the Burmese people was evident in the worship service as several Burmese men read the Bible readings and a Burmese choir sang "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," in their own language. In the final message of the morning, Pastor Merino said, "It is all about missions. If Jesus hadn't been willing to come to earth on a mission, where would we be? My wife and I didn't grow up in a Christian family. If people like you hadn't been willing to go out in mission, where would we be?"

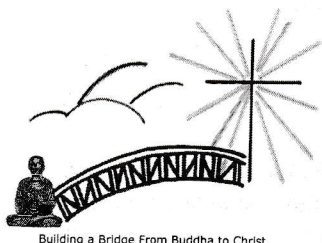


Pastors and lay readers standing in front of the tent used for the worship service.

Pastor Merino then challenged the congregation to respond to Isaiah's words as they headed into the future. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom will I send? Who will go for us?' I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8) New Life's assistant pastor, Rev. Jim Keller, responded to that challenge on behalf of the congregation by announcing their plans to start a regular Burmese Worship Service on June 23. Pastor Keller, the congregation's missionary to the Burmese people will serve as the pastor for that service.

After the worship celebration, the guest speakers, special guests from area churches, many past and present members of the church, and a large crowd of Burmese people enjoyed a meal and fellowship time together.

"New Life was all about Jesus back then, at the beginning, and it still is all about Jesus today."



Building a Bridge From Buddha to Christ

Burmese Worship Service – Weakness Turned to Strength

by Rev. Jim Keller

"My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak" (2 Cor. 12:9). I have been studying Burmese for nearly three years now, and still I cannot speak Burmese fluently. A large number of the Burmese whom we have regular contact with cannot speak English fluently. Add to that the fact that most are Buddhist, and you are looking at a recipe for disaster when it comes to starting a worship service in Burmese.

But what man considers the ingredients for disaster, God mixes together for success. I am forced to find interpreters to help me preach. These men have all come from strong Buddhist backgrounds. Yet they all have willingly volunteered to help me. Suddenly they have found themselves in a new role; they have found themselves struggling to understand a new teaching. They all have taken the task of interpreting for me very seriously. They want to make sure that they have the right understanding so that they can impart the right meaning to those Burmese who attend. My weakness has turned out to be God's strength. Burmese men who would not otherwise attend a Christian service are now attending and taking on a leadership role. God is using those who are strong Buddhists to now convey His message of love to others.



Setting up the fellowship hall for worship is too much for one person; again my weakness is God's strength. One Burmese family has taken on the responsibility of setting up the hall for worship. The wife prepares the altar. She lovingly places flowers from her flower garden in vases on the altar. She comes early so that she can thoroughly clean the building because it would be disrespectful to God to hold worship in a messy building. She is trying to find ways of turning our simple altar (a table with a white cloth on top) into a beautiful altar for the Lord.

Because I cannot sing very well, and certainly not in Burmese, another woman has volunteered to lead the singing. Each week she picks out a special song to sing during the offering, and she gathers together a group of singers to practice after church each Sunday.

My wife teaches the children after worship every Sunday. But as the number of children in attendance increases, so does her need for help. Two older Burmese teenagers frequently assist her. Burmese act as ushers. One Burmese young man diligently marks the text for the day in the Burmese Bibles and the English Bibles. He also makes sure that everyone has a Bible and knows what will be read.



Annette Keller teaches Burmese children after worship service.

Man's recipe for disaster has turned into God's formula for success. After four weeks of Burmese worship we are still going strong. Nearly 35 Burmese attend worship every week! Our actual attendance is close to 60 people every Sunday!

Truly our God is a God who takes the weak and makes them strong. Our God can bring growth out of even weak plants!

*"My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak."
(2 Cor. 12:9)*

"She lovingly places flowers from her flower garden in vases on the altar."

1st International Camp A Success!

by Annette Keller

Picture this: "A great multitude... from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). Pastor Jim asked us to do this in his sermon at the start of International Week at Camp Lutherhaven, June 16-21. We caught a glimpse of this vision as 27 children from such places as Bosnia, Burma, Vietnam, and Kenya joined with American campers to eat apple pie, Bosnian pita, Burmese style fried onions, burritos, cook hot dogs over the fire, sing "If You're Happy and You Know It" in Bosnian, play a Burmese ball game, and learn African clapping rhythms.

Picture this: Paige (pictured below, back row, left) one of the program facilitators, sits by herself in front of the lodge on Wednesday morning ...and we're all happy about this. Why? Each morning campers gathered in cabin groups for Bible study. However, the Muslim children were allowed to meet for a separate session led by Paige. But by Wednesday the children decided it was OK to stay with their cabins for Bible study. One of these girls went on to paint a cross and rainbow during the "cave painting" activity down in the nature center.



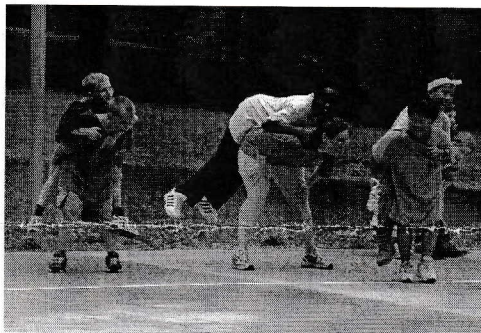
Meeting new friends from other cultures.

Picture this: All the children and their families growing in faith in Jesus. Please pray that this would happen and that a new generation of missionaries would be brought forth through this week.



"Cross-cultural" tug of war.

Thanks for your prayers and your financial support. God protected campers and counselors from sickness and injury. The week went smoothly with a "great family feel," according to the camp staff. God blessed us with a cook willing to let strangers in her kitchen and counselors loving their campers with the love of Jesus at a camp with the boldness to partner in this new adventure.



Kids overcoming language barriers.



International Camp 2002



We're on the web at:

www.newlife.in.lcms.org

Contact us at:

New Life Lutheran Church
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, IN 46803

Phone: 260/420-3024
Fax: 260/422-9180
e-mail: newlifer8@aol.com



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SPERK: Reaping the Harvest

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will if we do not give up." (Gal. 6:9)

by Jeanne Burger
reap a harvest

Seven years of work in Slovakia is now producing fruit through something called SPERK. In English you would call it: School For Lutheran Gypsies for Christ. This is the ongoing Lay Leadership Training school that Pastor Hans-Martin Dern and the Gypsy Mission Team have developed and are leading.

Pastor Merino attended one session of this school, which was held in the town of Roznava, and reported, "I was impressed with the leadership that is coming from the Team. They are teaching Gypsy lay leaders to study God's Word and to share it with their own families and neighbors. We had been told that there would be 18 Gypsies at the session, but 30 Gypsies showed up! There were a lot of young boys just out of high school who were there too, which was very encouraging to me."



Pastor Merino trains Gypsy leaders at SPERK



Students take a break during SPERK training. Pastor Dern is standing left with his wife Sandra and daughter Rosanna.

Pastor Merino went on to explain the significance of these sessions from a Gypsy perspective, "Usually if you can get Gypsies into a classroom setting at all, they will go out 17 times for a cigarette, they will talk to each other, and walk around and make jokes and such—they just won't settle down. But these students were very quiet. They would raise their hands and ask intelligent, well-informed questions, and they would help each other find the bible passages. It was unbelievable!"

Through SPERK the Lord is producing a harvest of Gypsy leaders who will help spread the Word of God to many of their own people.

We give glory to God for SPERK, and thank Him for all of the partners who have not grown weary in helping with this work—our Mission Connection readers who faithfully pray for and support the work, The Lutheran Church in Slovakia, Viola Fronkova, Pastor Dern and his family, the Gypsy Mission Team, the members of New Life and our PRO partners: LCMS World Missions, Indiana District LCMS, and Our Savior Lutheran Church in Louisville, KY.



Gypsy students at SPERK

New Life Mission Connections

Never Give Up!

Back in 1980, I became a Christian and was confirmed at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Santa Clara, California. I was 27 years old and being a Gypsy, I was ostracized from my family. But after 15 years of praying for our people and experiencing many disappointments both as a layperson and an ordained missionary pastor, I was more than a little discouraged—I really wanted to give up. I prayed, "Lord, I will stop pursuing the idea of Gypsy mission work. It doesn't seem that you want me to be involved in this." I went on with my work and ministry feeling a bit relieved that I could focus on something else for a while. It was October 1995.

A few weeks later, the phone rang and a woman in a thick Eastern European accent said, "Is this brother pastor Larry Merino?" "Yes," I said. "This is Viola Fronkova from Slovakia. I am calling to ask if you will come to help us with our dear Gypsy peoples?" Someone had given my name to church leaders in Slovakia hoping I could help with their mission outreach to Gypsies in that country.



Viola Fronkova: "Will you come help us with our dear Gypsy peoples?"

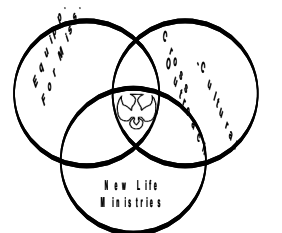
That was seven years ago this month. I have traveled to Slovakia a dozen times since then serving as missionary consultant to the church there and helping to train leaders for this work. I am happy to say the work is moving forward by the power and grace of God in Jesus.

The lesson: Never give up. Not ever. I admit that I was discouraged and couldn't see a way forward. But God showed me what He could do by His power in ways we could never imagine.

My dear friends, remember Paul's words: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* (Gal. 6:9)

Never giving up in my prayers for you,

Pastor Larry



New Life
Lutheran Church
Ft. Wayne,
Indiana

.....
"They were from every nation, tribe, race and language, and they stood in front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9
.....

Inside this issue:

The measure of success in Burmese Ministry

Never Give Up on Waiting

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2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 46803
USA

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Never Give Up on Waiting

by Annette Keller

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7) was four-year-old Felicia's memory verse in Sunday school. "Being still" in this day and age is a very hard thing to do. Sometimes the storms that come with missionary work become too great, and we want to give up. But the same Jesus who commanded the winds and waves to be still on the Sea of Galilee also can make us still in the "storms" of our everyday hustle and bustle as we share the Good News of Jesus with those who don't know Him.

In addition to Felicia's memory verse, our family prayed, "Lord, teach me to wait" as part of our morning devotions using My Family's Prayer Calendar 2002. This month God was encouraging us not to give up as we thanked God for farmers who patiently wait for crops to grow, talked about what we want to do when we grow up, and learned about those who waited in the Bible like Jacob, Noah, and Isaiah. Most importantly we prayed along with Jehoshaphat; "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You" (2 Chronicles 20:12).



One reason we want to give up is that we often don't know what to **do**. While waiting, we will **be**...in prayer with Jesus...in His Word...with other believers...and living out among those who do not know Him. It is important for us as a missionary family to remember these Bible verses so that we do not give up in the work with the Burmese. These verses put the focus on Whose work it is to bring Burmese to saving faith in Jesus. We need to be still, keep our eyes on Jesus, and wait for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to change hearts, minds, and lives according to God's timetable, not ours.

Labor Day 2002

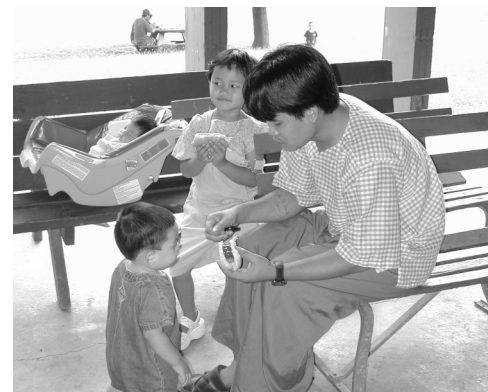
3rd Annual Burmese Picnic



Highlights of the day included volleyball, delicious Burmese food, family time and growing friendships



Fellowship, Food & Fun at Camp Lutherhaven



The Measure of Success

by Pastor Jim Keller

"How do you measure success working among Burmese Buddhists?" This is a question I have been asked by many people. My answer usually shocks them. We measure success by comparing the size of the home shrine. The larger and more elaborate the shrine becomes, the more successful we are.

This may seem to be contradictory. Obviously, the ultimate measure of our success is the removal of the shrine. But the intermediate measure of our success at communicating the Gospel is seen in the growing devotion to the home shrine. The reason for this is that God's Word is sharper than a two edged sword (Heb. 4:12). As the Burmese hear and understand God's Word, it starts to cut away at their beliefs. This is a very painful and frightening thing. It is the same reason that people avoid the dentist. It is not because they aren't already in pain or don't need a dentist, but it is because they fear the new pain that leads to healing.



Buddhist Shrine

It is the same with our Burmese friends. Everything they have been taught about Buddhism is being exposed as a lie. If the claims of Jesus are true, that means that their ancestors, including beloved parents and grandparents, are in hell right now. That is a painful truth they don't want to face. So they try as hard as they can to prove that Buddhism is a valid path. If they can do that, they can prove that Mom and Dad (many of whom died because of their children's desire to be freedom fighters) have a chance at heaven.

This struggle shows us that God's Word is at work in the lives of the Burmese. Yes, it is heartbreaking to walk into an apartment and see how much the shrine has grown. But knowing that God's Word is at work, we rely on God's promise that His Word will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11). Those Burmese who have been cut by the Word of God will also ultimately find healing in that very Word.

"There are more than 45 million people in Burma (Myanmar)...

82.9% are Buddhist."

Operation World

God gives us little glimpses of this...the new mother who requests that the Burmese worship service offer a prayer of thanksgiving at the birth of her daughter...the Burmese man who volunteers to translate this Sunday's sermon...the Burmese family who refuses to eat until we offer a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing for the food...the young Burmese man who practices his English pronunciation by memorizing short Psalms and Luther's Morning Prayer...the estranged Burmese man who now wants to resume Bible study. These are all signs of God's Word acting on Burmese people in God's time. But it often begins with more attention to the shrine....

"He Has Given Me A New Heart"

By Jeanne Burger

"God's love can be described in simple words: He is my strength, my hope, my breath. How can I live without Him? He has given me a new heart, a new spirit, and a new reason to live."

Doreen Uwanawich, (Gypsy member of Pastor Rohwer's church)

The Word of God is demolishing strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4) and transforming lives among Gypsies in California and Texas through a weekly on-line bible study led by our mission partner, Pastor Gary Rohwer. One of the women who participates in the study recently announced to her family that she is going to follow Jesus and quit telling fortunes.

This is a major decision for a Gypsy woman. Her father-in-law now has the power to kick her out of the family and send her away from her husband and children. He has already forbidden her to go to church. During a recent phone call this woman told Pastor Larry, "I feel completely at peace. I am not worried. Jesus is giving me strength." The on-line bible study gives her a connection to the Word of God.

There are many obstacles between Gypsies and Christianity, as one Christian Gypsy describes, *"We can only be with Gypsies...we are not allowed to go to school...Women don't have a choice about fortune-telling. We are very superstitious. We pray to the dead. We are told never to read the Bible or we will go crazy...Just about everything has a superstitious meaning revolving around good or bad luck...I pray for my culture and cry about how lost they are. The devil is strong among us."*



In a recent e-mail, one woman wrote the following to one of our members, "We're doing ok - still on the battlefield, but we know you are praying. Please pray for my father and brothers to come to Christ. We struggle...but we have online Bible study with Pastor and some cousins and a few others. Please pray our Bible study will grow and continue with God's Blessing."

Thank you for your support of our work among Gypsy people around the world. Your prayers give tremendous strength and courage to these isolated Christians and are the key to transforming more lives.



Transformation—
from fortune-telling
to Christ

New Life Mission Connections

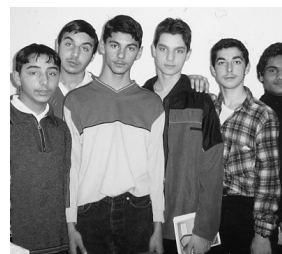
God's Transforming Power!

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2).

God has the power to change people and situations. Below are a few examples we have personally witnessed at New Life.

In California a Gypsy woman becomes a Christian and renounces fortune-telling. In Eastern Europe, young Gypsy men, who were involved in common thievery just months ago, now study in a program to become deacons in local Lutheran congregations. Both the woman and the young men are persecuted to varying degrees because they follow Jesus, but they feel mostly pity for their oppressors.

In Latvia a young Gypsy man studies at the Lutheran seminary with the hope of being called to pastoral ministry. In the American Midwest, a young Bosnian Muslim girl paints a picture of the rainbow of Noah and the cross of Christ only months after expressing her feelings for the Christian message with the words, "I hate Jesus."



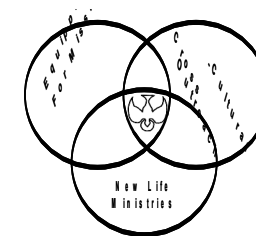
Young Gypsy men
in Eastern Europe

What is responsible for these changes in the lives of these new believers? The transforming power of Jesus.

As St. Paul encountered problems in the churches he planted he was well aware of this power, **"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).**

In God's mission to lost people, the transforming power of Jesus is the weapon we rely on to change people. This divine power brings them to faith as the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God. We thank God for you, our partners in this mission to lost Gypsies, Burmese and a host of refugees from around the world. Your prayers and support have empowered us to fight the good fight against the evil forces of this world and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus and His transforming power.

You are in my prayers,
Pastor Larry Merino
2 Cor. 4 :8



New Life
Lutheran Church
Ft. Wayne,
Indiana

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"They were from every nation, tribe, race and language, and they stood in front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9
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Inside this issue:

*New Burmese Bible
Dedicated*

*Refugee and Gypsy
Lives Transformed*

Contact us at:

New Life Lutheran Church
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 46803
USA

Phone: 260.420.3024
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Transformation in our Lives

by Marty Burger

Hindsight often makes us aware of the transformations in our lives. Ours began, quite innocently, when we heard about the 23 nations that lived at Centlivre Apartments. In September, 2000, six of us went to the "Friendship Center" for the first time and helped people with their homework, tried to understand the various languages and help in any way we could.

Early in the winter of 2001, an eager group of teenagers from Concordia Lutheran High School started a program for children. Those mission pioneers really made the program. The children expected them, loved them and waited for them.

The first party we had for the children was an Easter party. All went well until the teenagers tried telling the Easter story and the children walked out of the room. Our small bag of gifts to the children included small crosses. The Muslim children returned them to us and we took them because they trusted us enough to give them back. They resisted the Gospel, but we made it up to them with hugs and friendships.

At Christmas time, at another party, we tried to tell about Jesus again. That time we couldn't tell if they didn't listen because there was resistance to the story or the excitement of getting presents.

Then, last summer, many of the children attended Camp Lutherhaven with their parents' permission. The summer before they only went to Day Camp, but this time it would be "Night Camp". There would be other children there, and other counselors than the ones they were used to. At first many of them chose to attend the alternative to Bible Class, but by the end of the week all was transformed because everyone attended the classes. This fall, when they came back, we could share more and more.

Then it came time for the annual Christmas Party. When the children were told they would first hear a story, one of the girls said, "Is it going to be the same old story that we heard last year?" One of the teenagers replied, "No, it's the new and exciting story that's been told for 2000 years."

As Gene (Burger) told the story, the children sat in rows facing him. The other adults told them to be quiet and they were...the quietest they had ever been. Gene told the Gospel story, and asked them some questions. All the children sat with a glow on their face, their hands in the air waiting to share their knowledge. It was what we were waiting for...hoping for. Hopefully, now we can have stories every week. Most of the children are ready to continue the transformation.

We are encouraged. Mission work takes a lot of time. Looking at it week by week, we can see little change. Looking at the whole picture, we can see tremendous changes.

To God be the glory and thanks to the many adults and teenagers who make it possible.

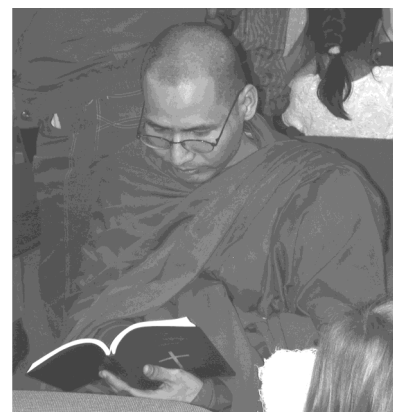


Gene Burger with some Afghani children at the Friendship Center



Marty Burger, pictured here with some of the refugee children, is a volunteer missionary at the Friendship Center

New Bibles, Special Artwork—Transform Burmese Ministry



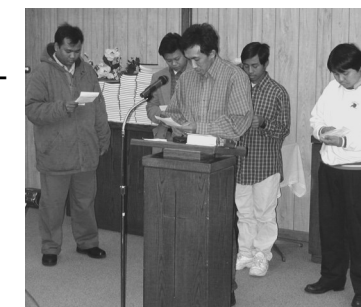
The Common Language Burmese New Testament is a valuable tool for the evangelism of the Burmese living in Fort Wayne. This Buddhist monk received a copy and asked to take one for the other monk at his monastery.

Our Burmese friends have transformed a simple room into a distinctively Burmese place of worship by covering the walls with artwork from their homeland, like the scene at right.



Burmese Common Language Bible Special Dedication Service

The dedication of the Common Language New Testament was held at New Life Lutheran Church, January 25, 2003. Burmese Christians rejoiced at receiving this new translation. Burmese Buddhists are excited that now they can read about Jesus in the Burmese language of today. These New Testaments were donated to New Life by a collaboration of the Bible Society of Myanmar and the American Bible Society.



The new bibles are on the altar for dedication as Burmese men read during the service

Burmese as a Second Language



Burmese children prepare for their lesson while their parents watch and help



2-year-old Parker Keller learns to write Burmese characters



Teacher Zaw Zaw helps 7-year-old Peter Keller with his lesson

Burmese language lessons are held every Sunday following the Burmese worship service. Burmese parents are eager for their children to learn about their native culture, and the people are encouraged to see one of their own teaching. Students learn by writing and even "singing" out the alphabet much like English students did in early American schoolhouses.

You can Stay in the Family: *The Power of Your Prayers!*



"Okay, you can follow Jesus, you can stop telling fortunes AND YOU CAN STAY IN THE FAMILY." These words represent one of the most amazing miracles among the Gypsy people in the United States in more than 25 years. It's like water turned into wine...

In February we wrote to you about a Gypsy woman in California who wanted to leave fortunetelling, but risked losing her family if she did. Not long after you heard about this, the men in her family (who have complete authority over her) put a lot of pressure on her to give in and tell fortunes again. And she nearly gave in to the pressure.

But we know that you, our partners, were busy praying, and we thank you. God heard, and He worked. The woman was strengthened, and was able to hold on to her faith in Jesus.

The hearts of the men in her family were miraculously changed. They allowed her to stop telling fortunes AND remain in the family. This is unheard of. In the past, any Gypsy who left fortunetelling was disowned by her family. This woman told Pastor Larry, "The best part of this is that now I can stay here and witness about Jesus Christ to other Gypsies."

As a result, we are already seeing more curiosity among the Gypsy fortunetellers.

Whether you have prayed with us for 10 years, or 1 day... rejoice!

Gypsies Teaching Other Gypsies



Because of your support, Gypsy leaders are being trained and Gypsies are hearing the Word of God!

(Following their recent trip to Slovakia and Latvia, Pastor Larry and Linda gave this report on SPERK, the Gypsy training school in Slovakia that is led by Pastor Hans-Martin Dern.)



Linda: At the SPERK session, all the leaders gave their lecture. Gustav trained them on how to respond to Jehovah's Witnesses and to other cults. He said, "What will you do when someone comes to your door and says this and this." He gave them homework. He said, "Get your pencils and write this down and take it home and look at it." And they did, because they respect him as an elder.

Larry: Then we have Jusso who taught about the family. He's like the Dr. Dobson of the team.

Linda: He had his little boy with him. It was wonderful. Jusso would be at the board writing, so he would ask his son to read. This little boy read Scripture for his father.

Larry: Pastor Dern did the theoretical teaching and the Gypsy men did the practical aspect of it. Another man, Roman, gave them something on the history, the background of a certain book. He's very quiet and likes to read his books, so he was the best one to show them the historical part.

Linda: They were teaching other Gypsies, about sixteen of them, many of them young boys. They took in a lot of information.

Larry: They're training these Gypsies to be leaders in the churches, and evangelists. It was wonderful!

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USA

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Email: newlifer8@aol.com
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New Life Mission Connections

Pulling Together

Five years ago, the future for Burmese refugees in Ft. Wayne seemed hopeless. Now, a Burmese choir stands up on Easter and sings "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow!"

Seven years ago the future of Gypsies in Slovakia seemed hopeless. Now Gypsy men there are teaching the bible to other Gypsies!

Before, I was the only Lutheran Gypsy pastor to reach out to 11 million Gypsies around the world. Now there is a young Gypsy man in Latvia preparing to become a pastor, who also has a vision to reach Gypsies around the world!



Pastor Larry Merino met some Gypsy school children during his recent visit to Latvia.

Twenty-five years ago my wife and I were disowned by our family for following Jesus. Now, my sister has turned her back on fortunetelling—yet, incredibly, she will be able to stay with our tribe and tell other Gypsies about Jesus!

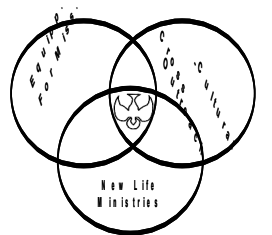
Hopelessness has turned into hope for people from many nations and tribes because of people pulling together to get the Lord's work done.

It is like work horses on a farm. One horse alone can only pull 4 tons, but when two horses work together they can pull 26 tons.

New Life is a small church. We cannot do this work alone. But the Lord has shown us that amazing things get done when people pull with us... people like you, our partners, who pray for, encourage and financially support New Life's mission work.

Thank you for pulling with us to get the Lord's work done!

You are in my prayers,
Pastor Larry



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"They were from every nation, tribe, race and language, and they stood in front of the throne."
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Inside this issue:

Two Ministries Pull Together

Latvia: A New Partnership

International Housing Expands

May 2003

Two Ministries Pulling Together

by Annette Keller

The invitation to our recent Burmese Bible dedication service read in Burmese: "Come hear a fortuneteller talk about the power of God's Word." We usually think about fortunetelling as something affecting New Life's Gypsy Ministry. But in this case God used our Gypsy ministry to bless our Burmese ministry.

After Pastor Merino learned that the Burmese people like to visit fortunetellers he asked one couple, "Do you think the Burmese would like to hear more about this?"

"Yes," the couple said eagerly.

So Linda spoke to about 80 Burmese people at the Bible dedication.

"I can remember as a young girl being very curious to know when this power was going to come to tell fortunes. There was a long line of fortunetellers in my family," Linda shared. "One day my mother said to me, 'Linda, it's time to read this woman's palm.' I said, 'But, Mom, I don't have the power.' She just laughed. 'Don't worry. Just sit down with this woman.' There I sat with this woman. I don't know who was more afraid, she or me.

"But as we sat and talked, I began to tell her things about her life. She was quite happy when she left, and I was quite happy for my \$10. I was only 13 years of age at that time."

Linda told the crowd how she quit telling fortunes after her husband became a Christian and showed her in the Bible that "fortunetelling is a bad smell before the Lord." Using the Bible, Linda explained why one should not be a fortuneteller and why one should not seek their services.

She shared with the Burmese how her power had come from the devil, and when one is curious about the future, the place to turn is the Bible, the church and one's pastor. The message has spread even further because Pastor Keller has also been able to distribute many audiotapes of the dedication service.



Burmese translator Lincoln Nyein Tin and Linda Merino tell the good news about the power of God's Word.



International Housing Adding an African House

New Life's International home has blessed families from various cultural backgrounds. Now, our International Housing ministry is expanding through a partnership with the members of St. Augustine Lutheran Church—A ministry of AIM (African Immigrant Ministries). Members from both churches are pulling together to find a second home and develop the plans and programs for this additional home, which will focus especially on African immigrants.

A Model Partnership

by Pastor Jim Keller

Missionaries are always looking for new ways to bring the gospel to lost people. Ideas, programs and methods all become instruments in the missionary's tool belt. This searching brought together Ft. Wayne area missionaries and Concordia Lutheran High School (CLHS), with the result that two Burmese students and four African students are enrolled at CLHS.

By working together we have been able to build a partnership that gives us the opportunity to not only affect one student and one family, but whole ethnic communities, as we raise up leaders who have received a first-class education, and daily exposure to the love of Jesus and His teachings.

This is the first year of this partnership. We were aware

"This is the model that has been very effective in Africa".

Rev. John Loum, African Immigrant Ministry

that a new idea like this would involve some risk and some effort, but we felt that the excellent education provided by CLHS as well as its emphasis on Christian teachings could be a valuable tool for missionaries who work with people of other faiths. Our two-pronged focus of family outreach and student outreach has been a vital tool in the evangelization of these families.

Future plans include partnerships with Lutheran elementary schools as well. We are seeking ongoing funds to keep this program alive, because we are seeing a noticeable difference in our students' attitudes toward Jesus. Just attending a daily religion class has caused them to rethink what they believe and why. Who would have thought that a Buddhist teenager would ask so many questions about Christianity? But that is exactly what is happening.



CLHS student, Kyaw Kyaw Oo, gets help with his homework from Pastor Keller as MaryJane Keller watches.

"It's not a matter of should we do this, but rather of how best to do this and how to fund it."

David Widenhofer, executive director of CLHS

Latvia: A New Partnership



L to R: Archbishop Janis Vanags of the Latvian Lutheran Church, Sandra Gintere, who initiated our connection with Latvia, & Pastor Merino.

New Life's Gypsy Ministry expanded to Latvia in February when Pastor Larry and Linda Merino visited there to meet with Gypsies and to consult with leaders and lay-people from the Latvian Lutheran Church who are eager to reach out to their Gypsy people.

Give thanks to God for new opportunities to reach Gypsy people!



A Gypsy family in Latvia. L to R Mareks Ignats, who is studying to become a pastor, his sister, father, mother and niece.

New Directions for Burmese Ministry

We hope you have enjoyed these highlights of the Burmese Ministry. Other ongoing areas of our ministry include:

- Leading weekly worship in Burmese, adult Bible study, and children's Sunday school
- Working with Burmese students enrolled in Lutheran schools
- Providing transitional housing for Burmese
- Teaching in-home Bible studies and training others (Burmese and American) to teach
- Increasing the number of volunteers involved in ESL, tutoring, and advocacy
- Serving as a consultant to agencies and other churches reaching out to Burmese

Our contacts with Burmese extend outside of Fort Wayne. We are actively involved with Burmese in the Indianapolis area, and we have regular contact with Burmese in Columbus, OH.

Because of the widening scope of this ministry it is now time to take the work to the next level. New Life Lutheran Church is officially "daughtering" the Burmese Ministry, allowing Pastor Jim to become the Missionary-At-Large to the Burmese in the Indiana District.

This transition will take place over the next eight months. New Life Lutheran Church will still be involved in the Burmese work as they provide volunteers and share resources. The Indiana District will provide on-going advice and assistance. Pastor Jim will need to raise all of the financial support for this ministry. We are asking you, our faithful supporters, to raise this ministry up in prayer. We are also asking you to help us financially. Please consider a generous one-time or monthly gift to continue this work.

New Life Lutheran Church will be handling the financial aspects of this ministry for the near future. Please indicate in the memo line of the check if this gift is for the *Burmese Ministry* or for the *International Scholarship Fund*.

Burmese ministry is at an exciting point in its short history! Please pray for God's protection and guidance as we strive to carry the ministry forward.

God's Blessing to you all!
Pastor Jim, Annette, Gwen, Peter, Felicia, Parker, MaryJane and Baby Keller.



Pastor Jim and Annette Keller with their children, L to R: Peter, Gwen, Felicia, Parker and MaryJane

Contact us at:

New Life Lutheran Church
2424 S. Coliseum Blvd.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana, 46803
USA

Phone: 260.420.3024
Fax: 260.422.9180
Email: newlifer8@aol.com
www.newlife.in.lcms.org

New Life Mission Connections

That They May Be Saved

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the [Burmese] is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:1-4)

Paul originally wrote these words about Israel. Since my trip to Burma, these words have become mine for the Burmese. I have seen the zeal for God that the Burmese have. Wherever you look in Burma you see pagodas, Buddhist monasteries or Buddhist monks.



A Pagoda in Burma

The artwork contains Buddhist symbols and themes. The peoples' daily lives revolve around Buddhism. They wear Buddhist talismans to ward off misfortune and bring blessing. They believe that all of this will bring them blessings in this life and also in the next. They are trying to work their way into Nirvana.

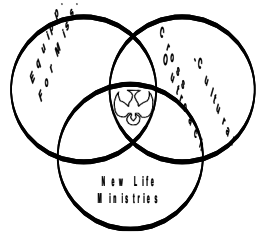
The Lord has placed these people on my heart. My time spent in Burma has only confirmed this. Walking through the Sule Pagoda, I watched the workmen on the scaffolding. They were adding to the pagoda because the people had donated so much money. I visited the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the most famous pagoda in Burma. It contains seven tons of gold in addition to precious stones. These pagodas and the thousands of others all across Burma are visual reminders of the spiritual darkness that engulfs the people.

My last morning in Burma was spent in a small Buddhist monastery. Some friends in the USA had made these arrangements. My hosts spoke very little English so I was forced to find out just how good my Burmese was. I was able to observe life in a monastery first hand. I learned the role of the local monastery in the life of the neighborhood.

My trip to Burma helped me understand the Burmese here in Ft. Wayne better and opened doors among the Burmese here in Fort Wayne who are very homesick and are eager to hear more about their homeland. It has also helped me understand Buddhism better. I made many good contacts while there. But most of all, my trip has strengthened my resolve to bring Christ to the Burmese!

Thank you for helping us shine the light of Christ into the spiritual darkness that engulfs the Burmese people.

God bless you,
Pastor Jim



New Life
Lutheran Church
Ft. Wayne,
Indiana

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"They were from every nation, tribe, race and language, and they stood in front of the throne."
Rev. 7:9

Inside this issue:

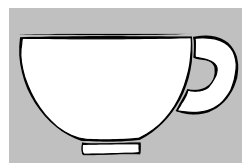
What's In The Cup?

*Burmese Teens
Grow in Faith*

*New Directions for
Burmese Ministry*

August 2003

What's in the Cup?



"The Buddha taught that everyone was born with a cup half full. Throughout your life you are either adding to the cup or taking away from the cup. The goal is to empty your cup.

How do you empty your cup?" This was the question that was posed to a group of five Burmese adults and one teenager. The setting was Sunday morning before worship. These six Burmese had gathered for Bible study. Only one of the adults is a Christian. The teenager is a recent convert to Christianity but has not told his parents yet.

There was much discussion in Burmese. The teen's father began telling of ways he could empty his cup. But before he could finish, his teenage son interrupted, "You can't empty your cup because everyday you are adding to it with your sinning."

The other adults all listened intently. One offered that it would take 550 life cycles to empty the cup. But again the question of how to actually empty the cup was raised. Again the reply was given, "You can't empty it because you keep adding to the cup."

The group was looking distressed. Finally Pastor Jim said, "That is right; you can't empty the cup because you keep adding to it. All you can do is end your life with a full cup."

It seemed hopeless. "Open your Bibles to Luke 22:42," answered Pastor Jim. The group opened their Burmese Bibles and read Jesus speaking these words in the Garden of Geth-

by Pastor Jim Keller

semane: ***"Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me. However, your will must be done, not mine."***

"What's in the cup?" asked Pastor Jim.

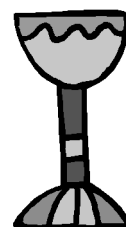
"Sin," replied a Burmese mother.

"That's right. But whose? Jesus was perfect."

"Ours?" asked the Burmese father.

"Yes, that is right. Jesus has taken your cup, not the cup you were born with or the cup you have today but your full cup you will die with, and He has poured all of it into His big cup. Jesus drank your cups so that now your cups are empty!"

Someday the question will be asked again of these Burmese, "What's in the cup?" But this time the answer will be "blessing" as they come to the altar and receive the cup of blessing that is His blood and the bread of blessing that is His body!



Partners

"It is of great encouragement to us to know that you are praying for us,"

*Pastor Charles Edwards
Myanmar National Lutheran Church*

It was hot in the small upper room. Usually the congregation met in the morning when it was cooler. But today was a special day. An American had come to this poor part of Rangoon, Myanmar (Burma). They had not had an American worship with them since the day their pastor, Charles Edwards, was ordained and installed. That day ended with a police raid and the deportation of the American guests. But this day there would be no police raids.

"Your brothers and sisters in Fort Wayne, IN, in America, pray for you every Sunday," Pastor Jim shared with them in broken Burmese.

Their small Lutheran congregation also prays for New Life Burmese Ministry every Sunday. Rev. Charles Edwards leads this church and also has established a number of preaching stations throughout the slum areas. He visits these stations every Sunday by bicycle. His brother Ivan is planting a church in a room beneath their mother's home.

These godly men are involved in reaching out to their Buddhist neighbors with the Gospel. They are translating Luther's Small Catechism into Burmese. New Life Burmese Ministry and Pastor Charles' church, Myanmar National Lutheran Church, are now sister churches.

Among our other partners in Burma is Word of Hope, the Lutheran Hour Ministry (LHM) satellite office in Rangoon. Mehm Tun Thein, program specialist for Word of Hope, visited our home during his time in the United States. He

by Pastor Jim Keller

will be providing copies of the Burmese LHM broadcasts for distribution among all the Burmese living in Fort Wayne.

His brother Rev. Mehm Tun Than, also came to visit us in Fort Wayne. He has a Christian radio broadcast based in Thailand in the Mon language and has been gracious enough to provide copies of these broadcasts for distribution among the Mon people living in Fort Wayne.

Many of you already know Say Plah, business manager of Myanmar Bible Society. Say Plah is overseeing some translation work for us. All these partnerships have opened up doors among the Burmese in Fort Wayne.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Myanmar as they labor under difficult conditions in their home countries.



Pastor Keller with Say Plah and his family in Burma

Noble Servants

Seven members of our Burmese youth group spent a week in June at Camp Lutherhaven for their Noble Servants Event. They cleared a trail, built a challenge course, and painted cabins at camp and assisted at a nature preserve in Elkhart and served at a women and children's center in Albion. This may have been the first event where participants of different cultures served together. In addition to the Burmese, the group included a German exchange student and youth from Fort Wayne, Huntington, and West Lafayette.



Seven Burmese youth enjoyed a week of fun and service at Camp Lutherhaven



Burmese Teens Grow in Faith



Teens studying the bible

On the Sunday after they returned from camp, three of the Burmese teens told Pastor Jim how much they missed camp, especially the Bible studies. Pastor Jim promptly picked up some Burmese Bible study materials and started teaching around

their dinner table. Now the teens gather each Friday night in the Keller's home for music practice and Bible study. The group has grown to include siblings and friends who come with many questions about the Bible and Christianity.

Recently, the Burmese teens were a vital part of the Vacation Bible School at Centlivre Village Apartments. Because most of them live there, they could invite the children and escort them from their homes to VBS and back again. The teens served as language and cultural translators during the week and also had a great time with the children as well as the teens and adults from New Life, Southwest Lutheran, Suburban Bethlehem, and other churches.



Helping with snacks, (L) and crafts (R)