



December Newsletter 2014

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Isn't it great to be alive? We just celebrated Thanksgiving and soon it will be the Christmas season with Christmas trees and decorations, family, friends, gifts, and "Tis the season to be jolly." Maybe you are even being blessed with a favorite team that is winning most of their games. WOW!

Have you ever given any thought as to why you are here living in relative prosperity in a nation that God has seemed to have blessed abundantly? I mean, why not living in poverty in some third world country, under a bridge some place, or on the sidewalks of some "skid row" in one of our cities, or even dead instead of being alive? I guess, if we don't find ourselves in any of those situations, we tend to want to take credit for it because of the good decisions we have made, the good things that we have done, the good people that we are.



But let's be realistic! In Isaiah 64:6 God tells us, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." So who are we fooling? By nature we are not as good as we might think that we are.

So, why am I so blessed? Maybe it doesn't have anything to do with how good I might think that I am or what I have done! Maybe, it has something to do with what God had in mind for us and what He has been doing.

So, once again let's go back and see what God has to say to us. Let's look at Galatians 4:4-7. "4 But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. 6 And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are His child, God has made you His heir." God has created this time before the second appearing of Jesus so that we may come to faith and call others to faith and salvation.



So, maybe, it is time for us to join in on the “family” business. We need to be focusing on the calling we have as His children, not just living our lives *for* Jesus but living our lives *with* Jesus. We need to be focusing on how we can help proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and reach out to those who have not yet experienced the Love of God our heavenly Father. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, ¹⁰ *For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.*

So, why are we still here? I think the answer should be obvious knowing what we just have read. The problem is that the world out there is constantly telling us something else. So the question is still hanging there waiting for an answer,

“Who are we going to follow?”

-- Opportunities -- Challenges -- Needs -- Accomplishments --

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 we are reminded to *“encourage each other and build each other up.”* We can do that by listening to each other.

I think that it is always interesting to hear of some of the activities that our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing down in Mexico.

Last week I received an email from Rev Isaac Garcia, President of the Lutheran Synod of Mexico and pastor of Betania (Bethany) Lutheran Church in Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Pastor Isaac said that they had a nice service on the 23rd and were able to spend some time with the members of Betania. Then on Monday they took a trip down to an

amusement park (Bosque Magico) in Monterrey with some of the church youth. The reason for the trip was that two of the members of the youth



group, who have been members of the church for many years, are getting married on December 6. This was kind of a last hurrah for them before they move on to a new life. Pastor Isaac asked for your prayers for Anahi Santana and Angel Mendiola.

Pastor Isaac also thanked all you who made it possible to install water and sewer at Mesias (Messiah) Mission in the colonia outside of Rio Bravo. No more carrying of water and now maybe the bathrooms can be completed.

Decisions, decisions, decisions!

Some of the people who want to get a degree in theology so they can become ordained pastors now have a few big decisions to make. Concordia Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, and LCMS partner church have approved five grants in which they selected Job Jimenez from San Luis Rio Colorado, Guillermo who works with Job Jimenez, Neftali Garcia son of Pastor Isaac and Yolanda in Rio Bravo, and Samuel Perez Herrera and his wife Mayra from Matamoros. The seminary trains future pastors from not only Argentina, but also from Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries. The scholarships include food, housing, payment of school and medical insurance.

One of the problems is that it is quite a trip to go all the way down to Argentina. On the one hand, on campus education does have some advantages, particularly that the students are able to concentrate almost exclusively on their theological and practical preparation, without a lot of other distractions. And on the other hand, on campus education requires that the student leave his church and ministry for an extended period of time. What would that do to the ministries that these people are currently involved in? And finally, how would the social context in Argentina affect them since it is different from that of Mexico.

Another problem is that the scholarships do not include transportation for students from Mexico to Argentina. That cost is over \$1,000 one way depending on where you are coming from.

Pastor Isaac informed us of a problem that Pastor Reyes is now having. He has a problem because cataracts are forming on his eyes and that is affecting his ability to see clearly. So my concern right now is Reyes' vision due to the problem of the cataracts.

Reyes is a servant of our Lord serving the people in Guasave. Pastor Reyes is serving El Divino Emanuel, Nueva Jerusalén, and a mission at Las Moras. God has been using Reyes to help people to see the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the salvation they have through Jesus.

Job Jimenez said that when he was with Pastor Isaac they talked with Pastor Reyes about this problem. Reyes said that they would be needing 18,000 pesos for eye surgery, which would be about 1,500 American dollars.



Pastor Jose Reyes

We would like to be able to be there in person to physically support and help out, but unfortunately, for many of us that is not possible. But at the same time we would like to help Pastor Reyes to physically see better and thus enable him and his wife Martina to continue their ministry there in Guasave among the people who the Lord is preparing to hear God's Word and be brought together with us into the family of God.

All your gifts have been a blessing to this ministry. One unexpected one was the amount we received this last time from Thrivent Choice Dollars. Those of you who designated your Choice Dollars to KIMA made it possible for us to receive a gift of \$809. Praise the Lord!

We do ask for your continual prayers and, if the Lord has blessed you, we ask that you might consider making a gift, small or large, towards this ministry. Besides those things mentioned above, we have our monthly commitments for the subsidy of workers in Mexico, expenses of providing computers for administration and theological classes, and the incidental activities that come along that only the Lord knows about.

May God bless you, your family, and your ministries,

Rev. Norman Finke
Executive Director of KIMA

Gifts can be sent to:
KIMA or Koinoneo Independent Mission Agency
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