



MISSION NEWS & HELPING HANDS

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia

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Peru

Our PERU Mission Field 50 Years of Grace

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From the Editor—Rev. Thomas Heyn,
Board for World Outreach Administrator

■ **Welcome** to this special edition of *Mission News & Helping Hands*. Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod joins our Christian brothers and sisters in Peru in celebrating 50 years of God's grace. Rev. James Olsen has written a history of the workers who served and some of the places they worked. Rev. Segundo Gutiérrez names the Peruvian pastors who were trained and served in the past and the present. The article by Rev. Timothy Erickson reminds us how the influence of the church reaches farther than we might ever imagine. We thank Rev. Wayne Halvorson for contacting the authors of the articles and gathering their works. Read the stories of various men who reflect on the times they were serving in Peru. And meditate on the grace of God that was, and is, at work gathering his people into his church.



500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation



Witnesses to Peru: Many Mission Workers Sent and Serving, Many People Served and Saved

The ELS convention of 1965 passed a resolution directing the mission board to “find a foreign mission field and report to the next convention with definite plans to begin work.” After two years of research, a call was extended to **Rev. Theodore Kuster** in 1967. A year later, he, along with **Rev. A. M. Harstad**, surveyed Bolivia and Peru. The 1968 convention approved the plan, and in July of that year, Missionary Kuster, **Mr. Orlin Myrlie**, and their families arrived and began intensive language study.

The first contact was with children, teaching many of them Bible stories in neighborhoods. Then, on Easter Sunday 1969, the first worship service was conducted at a home in Reynoso, a suburb of Lima. Training Peruvians to lead and share in the ministry was one of the next goals. One year later, **Rev. James Olsen** and his family arrived to assist with the ministry, primarily to focus on the training of national workers.

In the early months of the ministry, it was reported that regular worship gatherings were held in eleven places. By early 1971, over a dozen baptisms and two dozen confirmations were performed. National leaders began to conduct worship services in several locations. In the fall of 1971, the opportunities to tell the good news of Jesus expanded to other villages in the mountains of Peru. Great interest was established in Pacllón. At a distance of some 200 miles from Lima, it was only accessible by horseback.

On Reformation day 1971, “Centro Cristiano” was officially organized and legally established as a Peruvian Lutheran Church. Officers were chosen to begin managing their own church. In January of the next year, 35 more children were baptized and 30 adults and youth were confirmed following biblical instruction.

“...and you
will be my witnesses
in Jerusalem, and in all
Judea and Samaria, and
to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

Rev. Robert Moldstad was called to join the

team of missionaries. Rev. Kuster left the field when he was called to Nicaragua for a new field of mission work.

Mr. David Skogen

was called to become an administrator for the mission and a lay evangelist in Peru. Mr. Skogen, a layman from Princeton, Minnesota, had been in Nicaragua volunteering for the International Social Service. In May 1976, he moved to the coastal city of Chimbote, 300 miles north of Lima, where he established a congregation and taught Bible classes. After the mission in Chimbote was established, Mr. Skogen moved to Lima to assist the mission team. He returned to Minnesota for health reasons in 1982.

In 1976, Rev. James Olsen returned to the United States for personal and health reasons. **Rev. Martin Teigen** was called to replace Missionary Olsen in mission outreach and the training of nationals. Rev. Teigen returned to the United States in 1993. Rev. Robert Moldstad returned to the United States to serve a Spanish mission in Bell Gardens, California.

About 1980, the Nicaragua mission was closed due to dangerous political unrest in the country. **Rev. Theodore Kuster** was called again to Peru along with **Rev. David Lillegard**. That same year, Rev. Kuster returned to the United States. In 1982, **Rev. Timothy Erickson** was called to Peru. Later, he was called to the mission in Chile. He retired in April of 2018.

To bolster the outreach and training of national leaders, **Rev. Dan McMiller** was called, arriving on the field in 1985. He was supported on the field through financial subscriptions of ELS families, friends, and mission supporters. This was the beginning of *Helping Hands*, organized to receive the special gifts that would support the sharing of the message of Christ with the nations. The turnover of missionaries continued. Rev. Lillegard returned to the United States in 1987. In 1988, **Rev. David Haeuser** (photo at right) was called to teach in the seminary in Peru. Later, he became the president of the seminary. He remained in the Peru field until his retirement in July of 2017. **Rev. Terry Schultz** was called to serve in Peru for outreach and teaching at the seminary in 1996. Outreach began in the jungle regions of Peru. Rev. Schultz returned to the United States in 2011. **Rev. Kurt Smith** was on the field in Peru in 2003–

2004. **Rev. Karl Kuenzel** served for almost a year in 2004 having been called from Chile to aid in the efforts in Peru.

As of this year, 2018, nearly all of the governing of the Peru mission field is being handled by the **Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru (SELP)**. National pastors and professors are handling the Holy Spirit’s tools—proclaiming the Word of God and administering Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Seminary training continues. Mission outreach is being accomplished. There are Christian schools where the message of Christ dominates the learning process. All learning in these schools is supplemented with the “one thing needful”—the message of salvation through faith in Jesus.

What the Spirit of God has accomplished is astounding. Many souls have believed in Christ Jesus, and have been transferred to the Kingdom of Christ in Heaven. Many now are continuing to hear and spread the Good News to present and future generations in Peru. Praise God!



The above history was provided by Rev. James Olsen. Along with those workers specifically mentioned above, a number of lay volunteers from the United States served in Peru for varying amounts of time. Numerous Peruvian pastors and evangelists have been trained and continue the work today. We thank all of them for serving God’s people in Peru.

Rev. David and Ruth Haeuser



The Teaching and Learning of Evangelism—Rev. James Olsen

Our Savior reminds us, “*Indeed I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out...and I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries*” (Ezekiel 34:12–13).

In 1970 I was called to begin a theological training program. One of my earliest students at that time was **Fidel Convercio**. I noticed rather early that members of the congregation often turned to him when seeking advice and answers to questions, and that he was well-respected and liked by his fellow townsmen at the young age of 21 years.

I wanted to show Fidel an approach to evangelism which is simply face-to-face contact. We traveled to Llamac and Pocpa in September, 1973. Fidel walked while I rode a horse, since he was pretty sure I would soon be exhausted walking at the high altitude of our trail, and I agreed!

We were not disappointed in Lamac. Eighty-five people trudged through a drenching down-pour of rain to hear us proclaim Christ and Him crucified. I learned that an epidemic of pneumonia was sweeping the town of Pocpa. When someone asked why we had come, Fidel answered that we would like to show a film-strip about the life of Jesus and talk to the people about a new religion—and the word spread. The president of the community came to us and offered us use of the town hall for a gathering that evening.

Forty-five people assembled in the town hall. The townspeople, who previously had not permitted missionaries to address them in a public meeting, listened with full attention.

We showed the filmstrip *The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. I followed this with an address on objective justification. Then, Fidel spoke for about 45 minutes on the same topic in greater depth than I had. This 23-year-old man had been a believing Christian for a relatively short time, but he believed sincerely in God’s justifying grace and could explain it well.

Some in this audience did not speak Spanish well and preferred Quechua, their tongue of “hearth, cradle and home.” Fidel sensed that some among the elderly were not grasping his words fully. He approached them, and addressing three or four individually, he spoke to them in Quechua to explain justification by grace. I noticed men and women nodding and perhaps smiling in approval. Words which God had placed into the legal system of the Quechuas now were connected with the Gospel message. Law, transgression, and pardon found new significance for people’s consciences and souls, because these words were now linked to the objective fact of Christ’s saving work and God’s declaration of forgiveness for Jesus’ sake.

After the evening’s presentation, my diary of the trip records that I baptized three children. One of them, a tiny infant, had contracted pneumonia in the epidemic. I baptized the child by request of the parents. About a half hour later, the little one’s soul was taken from his frail body by our heavenly Father and brought home to Him, who had from eternity imagined this child’s existence here and arranged things to be so.

Rev. Fidel Convercio



Baptism at jungle church



President Rev. Andres Robles



Teaching in Lima Seminary

Fond Memories of Peruvian Leaders/Pastors—Rev. David Lillegard

One of the men in the congregation who was noted as a leader, got up and preached a sermon too. But his sermon was better than mine! After he was done, another leader stood up and did the same thing—and his sermon also was better than what I had preached! Is it any wonder that this mountain congregation continued to thrive and grow?

The work done by the missionaries properly centered to a great extent on teaching and training the national Peruvian men who heard the Gospel and soon took responsibility for the spread of Christ’s Word.

I remember an incident at Pacllón in the Peruvian mountains. I conducted a little service and preached a sermon in the building they were using as a chapel. After I was done, one of the men in the congregation, noted as a leader, got up and preached a sermon too. But his sermon was better than mine! After he was done, another leader stood up and did the same thing, and his sermon also was better than what I preached! Is it any wonder that this mountain congregation continued to thrive and grow?

Fidel Convercio was an outstanding leader in Pacllón (photo on page 4). He was influential in other places too, including Lima. Before he became a Christian, Fidel got into fights. He had a scar on his face from that. He beat his wife. After coming to faith,

he became an entirely different man and a powerful force for Christianity in Peru. We thank the Holy Spirit for him, and others like him, who became such great blessings in that important work.

I remember riding a horse to Pacllón with Fidel, a young girl who was a member in Lima, and one of my daughters. It became very dark. At one point I got off my horse, but I had to immediately get back on. I could see nothing. The girl from Lima started crying out, “I’m afraid!” Fidel called out, “Careful, there’s a big hole ahead.” Then he burst into laughter. It was, of course, all done in a good spirit.



Grateful for 50 Years of Blessings

—Rev. Segundo Gutiérrez

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru is headquartered in the center of Lima, half a block from the Parque de la Reserva. God's guidance is evident in our history. Although the church did not advance as people first thought it would, nonetheless, it advanced as God desired and blessed it. By the abundant grace of God, this church not only has grown, but it has progressed in its exceptional mission field.

Despite the ups and downs of the history of our congregations, we thank God that the word of God continues to achieve its purpose in the coast, mountains, and jungle of our country and around the congregations in Lima.

The history of our church in Peru highlights the blessings that Christ has poured out abundantly upon our congregations since the beginning. We have the privilege to continue taking the gospel to our neighborhoods in the future. Our purpose has not changed. We still exist to serve the community—and ourselves—with the word of God and the sacraments.

The conclusion remains the same after all these years: As God said through the prophet Isaiah, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55: 8, 11).

Seeing the dedication and hard work that all the missionaries gave during their whole lives, leaving their country for the love of God in the work of the Lord, they left us their example that we would broadcast as the Apostle Paul says, *“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us”* (Philippians 3:17).

Our Peruvian pastors are the fruit of all this work carried out by the missionaries. Some are in heaven and others are still doing their work in different places on the coast, in the mountains, and in the jungle region of Peru.

Those pastors are/were the following: Roberto Berrospid (deceased), Segundo Gutiérrez (director of the seminary of the SELP), Fidel Convecio, Abraham Rosario (no longer serving in the SELP), Andres Robles (current president of the SELP), Oswaldo Fernández, Braulio Capulian, Jaime Cortez (promoter of the Martín Lutero School and professor in the seminary), Ronal Rivas (leads the jungle work and is the promoter of the jungle schools), Guillermo Carrera (professor in the seminary), Giovanni Rivas (director of the Martín Lutero and Jesús Redentor schools), Gabriel Asto, Santos Meléndez, Jorge Estrada, José Antonio V., and Vicars Celso Bautista, Roy Albarrán, and Ricardo Orellana. (NOTE: **Eighteen pastors and vicars trained over 50 years.**)

This is the history of our National Church in Lima, Peru. We thank God for giving us the wonderful wisdom—the Word of God—that today, with the help and power of the Holy Spirit, motivates us to continue carrying this message of salvation to all men for the glory of God.

Peruvian Pastors



Working in Chile, Remembering Peru

—Rev. Timothy Erickson

Although I most recently served as a missionary in Chile, fourteen years ago, I was serving in Peru. I have many memories of my time there. Some highlights for me are the following: the trips to visit the mountain congregations, the beginnings of the schools in Lima, the development of the congregations in Lima, the classes for the training of Peruvian leaders, seeing new Christians grow in their faith and mature, and remembering some who died in the faith and are now in heaven. I wrote many articles about these things in the past for *Mission News* and the *Lutheran Sentinel*.

My memories from Peru continue in our work in Chile. Members of our Peruvian church have moved to Chile and become members here. It is evident that the Holy Spirit has guided his message for the salvation of souls in that, when the Peruvian Christians made the move from one country to another, they looked for the church in their new country. One of the blessings and joys of the work in Chile has been the continuing ties with the members of the Peruvian church. Some have come to visit, such as the three Peruvian pastors who came for a conference and for the ordination of Mario Gálvez, the first Chilean pastor. Others have come to live and work because of better economic opportunities in Chile. Several have become faithful members of the church in Chile.

Throughout my years in Chile, I have had baptisms of children who have one parent who is Peruvian. Two of these baptisms took place recently in April 2018. These two are the great-grandchildren of Peruvian member Naomi Príncipe, whose family is from the Chimbote area of Peru. Naomi has six children. She had her children baptized in our Lutheran Church in Peru. Her grandchildren were also baptized in our church. I was present for some of those baptisms. And now it is time to begin the baptisms of her great-grandchildren. Three of her children live in Chile, and she spends half a year in Chile and half a year in Peru. Her children have moved to Chile for greater economic opportunities.

Naomi and her children have known almost all the missionaries who have worked in Peru. Her children are in the same age group as my

children, and they remember playing with my children and the children of missionary Martin Teigen when they were young.

The mission in Peru has an influence that goes beyond the borders of that country. The work done in Peru continues wherever they are in the world. The effects of 50 years of work are evident. It is a wonder of God's grace and the work of His Holy Spirit that people, who became members of the church in Peru and are now living in Chile, are still hearing that Jesus died for their sins to redeem them.

Small Beginnings Yield Rich Fruit—Rev. David Haeuser

Shortly after leaving the Peru mission field, I was invited to give a presentation at Hope Lutheran Church in Portage, Indiana, where Joshua Skogen serves as pastor. Part of the presentation showed a trip to Chimbote, a seven hour drive north of Lima, where Pastor Segundo Gutiérrez had invited me to preach for the anniversary of the church. It was a special privilege to tell the members in Portage, Indiana, that what they were seeing in the presentation was the fruit of work done by their pastor's father, Mr. David Skogen. In the early days of the mission he had gone to Peru as a lay missionary, had lived for a time in Chimbote, and when he returned, he left behind a group of people who trusted in their Savior and continued as a congregation of the mission.

Under God, that small beginning has borne rich fruit. Pastor Gutiérrez, the pastor at Chimbote, is married to a daughter of one of the people that David Skogen evangelized during his time in Peru. He is not only pastor of the Chimbote congregation, but is also in charge of the seminary program in Lima that trains pastors for the entire Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru. He and one other pastor, Jaime Cortez, and a current seminary student have all come from the Chimbote congregation.

Students at Tarapoto seminary



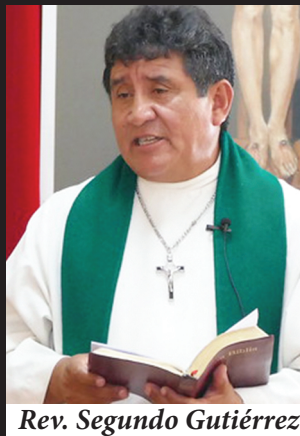
A Special Example of the Holy Spirit's Work in Chimbote—*Mr. David Skogen*

Martha and I moved to Chimbote, Peru, on June 3, 1976. I was helping the missionaries in Peru as an evangelist. We moved there with the names of eleven contacts that had been referred to us by members of the church in Lima, five hours south of Chimbote.

We made contacts with some people in the streets, even if they were not on the list. Bible lessons and conversations about Jesus the Savior were easy to lead even on the street. One such contact was Mario Mejia. He had a sales stand along the street by the technical school. My diary says, “**The stand with a Pepsi sign on it.**” We had some classes by his street stand.

One day while in class with Mario, his sister Marina came along, introduced herself, and asked if I could get her a Bible. On Saturday, October 2, 1976, we started weekly classes in the home of Marina and her husband Fermín and their daughters Maura, Juana, and Victoria. I never had to write attendance for those classes because they were always there. They were very interested in the Bible that had been given to them. In the fall of 1977, Fermín, Marina, and their three daughters were confirmed. Other groups had been instructed and formed the Chimbote Lutheran church.

So, among all these people mentioned above, who is the special example of the Holy Spirit's work? I myself never met him. No missionary was in Chimbote when he was brought into the family of believers in Christ. Having returned to the United States by that time, I found out about it from *Mission News*. God used Mario, by the street stand with the Pepsi sign, to lead his sister Marina, which led to classes with her family. Her daughters Maura, Juana, and Victoria were the most dedicated I encountered. Juana married **Segundo Gutiérrez**. Who is he? He is now the pastor at Chimbote, a leader in the Peruvian Lutheran Church, and president of the seminary in Lima, Peru. At present, he is training seminary students in Chimbote to become pastors and missionaries to other towns in the northern parts of Peru. **The Holy Spirit's work—it began at “the stand with a Pepsi sign on it.”**



Rev. Segundo Gutiérrez



Call to Action

What can you do to help?

- Thank the Lord for his many years of blessing on our mission efforts and the growth that he alone gave through blessing his Word and sacraments.
- Continue praying for the church in Peru. As with the church in any place, it faces challenges as Satan always works to frustrate the church. Pray that the message spreads and takes deep root.
- Pray that the Lord would bring forward more men in Peru to prepare to become pastors.
- Support the ongoing work in Peru and elsewhere with your financial gifts. We have a growing number of opportunities around the world to share God's Word. Your financial gifts enable us to make the most of these opportunities.
- **To donate to the ELS World Outreach ministries, please use the attached envelope or visit our website: els.org/donate.**
- If you have questions, please contact us in the following ways:

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