



September 2021

Mission News

& Helping Hands

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach
Sharing the Gospel in
South America and Asia

A Much-Needed Trip to Peru



From the Editor

Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach
Administrator

For the first time in a year and a half, we were able to visit one of our mission fields. Rev. Timothy Bartels and I visited Peru in July to meet with the Peruvian leaders and deal with some important issues.

We have also received additional thanks for Covid relief provided in another area of our work in India.

We appreciate your prayers for the work in our world fields and your financial support that makes this work possible.

"O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief" (Ps 143:1).

Part I: Overcoming Obstacles

What do a visit to Peru and the pandemic have in common? A God who can overcome obstacles. While obstacles stood in the way of a visit to Peru, the visit was necessary for two reasons: (1) the Peruvian leadership requested a visit to help mediate fallout among the clergy over alleged mismanagement; and (2) there was an ongoing need to encourage the work of the Peruvian church.

The pandemic, the first obstacle, delayed our visit for eight months due to Covid restrictions. However, as restrictions lifted, a trip was made possible this July, courtesy of Samuel Schwan, a layman interested in the jungle communities where our Peru synod works. He is partnering with the Rainforest Flow foundation to bring clean water to the jungle communities that we serve. Since he was going to Peru, he wanted to coordinate his trip with our visit.

Upon arriving, Pastor Heyn and I faced the next obstacle—the division in the church over strong evidence of mismanagement by a few pastors charged with administering the work in the Peru synod. We sat down with the parties at odds, one by one. Under the mediation of Pastor Heyn, the parties aired their grievances. After hearing the grievances, we attempted to find a way forward with correcting the situation and reconciliation.

(l to r) Nancy Santullo, founder of Rainforest Flow; Samuel Schwan; and Caleb, chief engineer for Rainforest Flow ►



Two pastors, one being the previous synod treasurer and the other being the coordinator of the jungle work, refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing despite the evidence against them, and subsequently refused to reconcile. It was heartbreaking to see an unwillingness to reconcile and a parting of ways. A third pastor acknowledged wrongdoing and expressed a desire to reconcile. It was heartwarming to see reconciled brothers shake hands and embrace.

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These attempts to address problems and seek resolution and reconciliation took place because new leadership was elected in April of 2020. **One of the goals of the new leadership, working with the Board for World Outreach, was to create procedures for complete transparency (openness) of ministry and the accountability required of Christian leaders.** This brought irregularities to light which were addressed during our visit. As they go forward, the new Peruvian leadership has in place processes for full accountability. The Board for World Outreach is confident that projects funded by ELS members and friends will be completed as planned.

In short, these mediations helped bring closure to a painful time in the Peruvian church. Now that there has been closure, the Peruvian church can refocus its energy on the work it has before them with some really bright spots on the horizon.

Part II: Ongoing Work in Peru

That brings us to the second goal of the field trip—to encourage the ongoing work of the Peruvian church. This goal is illustrated by three stories. The first involves a man named **Carlos**. Carlos is a member of Dios Es Mí Fortaleza (God Is My Strength) Lutheran Church in Chimbote. Chimbote is a coastal city about five hours north of Lima and is served by Pastor Segundo Gutiérrez. Some thirty years ago Carlos met his wife, **Betty**. They had a civil wedding, but not a church wedding. Years later, through the outreach of Pastor Segundo, they became members of Dios Es Mí Fortaleza. Carlos had gotten to know Pastor Heyn quite well from past visits. Since he and Betty had never had a church wedding, it was his fervent desire to have a church wedding and for Pastor Heyn to officiate. So, some thirty years later, during our Peru trip, they celebrated their church wedding with Pastor Heyn officiating.

Carlos is a retired policeman. Dios Es Mí Fortaleza also has other members with professional careers: Lucia, a nurse, Andy, a surgeon and Willy, a dentist student. This is unusual for our Peruvian churches, where there is much poverty. These professional members have the passion and gifts to do outreach in their community. It is their goal to have a clinic next to the church and offer services at a reduced cost. They envision the clinic to be an avenue to connect others to Jesus.

The second story is about a man named **Fidel Convércio**. Fidel, a man of retirement age, is pastor of the mountain churches. The mountain churches are remote and removed from the urban churches of Lima and Chimbote. Earlier this year Pastor Fidel's wife was gravely ill with Covid. She has recovered but is in a weakened state. After she got well, Pastor Fidel became ill with pulmonary fibrosis. He has recovered but is also in a weakened state.

Pastor Fidel willingly serves four remote mountain congregations. Yet, with a tired voice, a tear in his eye and a lump in his throat, he spoke to us regarding the weight of caring for the four congregations that lay on his shoulders. He has that extra weight, in part, because one leader died, and another left the church. A plan of personal visitation and live streaming services was put together to help support Pastor Fidel and give him a little respite.



▲ Peruvian Leadership (l to r): Pastor Segundo Gutiérrez; Pastor Heyn; Vicar Roy Albarrán; Pastor Andrés Robles; Vicar Celso Benites; and Finance Manager Cesar Convércio

One of the goals of the new leadership, working with the Board for World Outreach, was to create procedures for complete transparency (openness) of ministry and the accountability required of Christian leaders.

Carlos and Betty's church wedding with Pastor Heyn officiating ▼



Standing: Pastor Fidel Convércio ▼



▲ Louis Terry Community

Then there is **German** (pronounced “Hare-MON”). German is the leader of his community (called Louis Terry where we have a congregation and church) as well as the effective leader of the jungle communities with which we work. He was brought into the church through the early efforts of Missionary Terry Shultz. German told us that before our missionaries came to the jungle, they knew a little about Jesus. At that time, though, they fought with their neighboring communities. With sadness in his eyes, he related that the fighting included hurting and injuring one another with weapons. When our missionaries came, however, they learned to know more about Jesus. As they learned, they began to lay down their weapons, and as they laid down their weapons they now live more peacefully with their neighbors.

German is pictured on the left ►

German has been instrumental in working with the other jungle leaders and communities during this time that has troubled the Peruvian church. Despite the efforts of one of the pastors who parted ways with the Peruvian church and who tried to coax the jungle pastors to leave the synod with him, German has remained very loyal to the Peruvian synod and the ELS. **Due to his steady leadership, peace has been re-established with many of the jungle leaders and communities and the door remains wide open to continue and expand the jungle work.**

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Part III: Summary

In summary, we know that Jesus wants peace in his church. It is the peace that our Mediator, Jesus, has made for us by removing the biggest obstacle of all, our sin, and putting us at one with God through the shedding of his blood. This enables us to live at peace by reconciling with one another when we have been put at odds, and it enables the church to reach out with the peace that Jesus made for all.

Finally, it was an honor and pleasure to be able to represent the ELS Board for World Outreach on this field trip. Thank you for your prayers and support.

*Timothy Bartels, Chairman
South America Committee
ELS Board for World Outreach*



Needs for Peru:

IN THE MOUNTAIN REGION

- 4 smart TVs for the congregations to stay connected to the Peruvian church through online viewing of sermons and services.

IN THE JUNGLE

- food for undernourished children
- first aid kits for snake bites and other injuries
- three laptops for teachers
- two projectors for teachers
- a printer
- tablets for some 25-30 students
- a loudspeaker
- a chainsaw.

We thank God for His work in Peru as well as in the states. Perhaps your church can embrace one of the above projects with funds. Any help you can give in the enclosed envelope is greatly appreciated.

waiting for food in
the country ▼

waiting for food
in the city ▼

Covid Update from Jabalpur, India

Greetings to you in the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you so much for Covid relief
funds. I have received \$2,000 for
Jabalpur which I have used for medical
help, providing food, sanitizer, and
masks to the poor. I am also sharing
some photos with you. Do pray for all
the people who are affected by Covid.

In His service,
Vijay Sidney, Lutheran Mission of
Salvation - Jabalpur, India

food distribution
by Mr. Vijay
Sidney (in blue
shirt) ▶

News from Other Mission Fields

South Korea — In accordance with South Korean
requirements, Pastor-candidate David Choi is returning to
his home country where he will make final application for a
Korean resident visa. Please keep him in your prayers that he
may successfully acquire the resident visa he needs to carry
on his work.

Chile — The churches have started to resume
in-person worship and visits to homes. Mr. Jon Gross
accepted a position with the Academia Cristo program of
online outreach and subsequently has withdrawn from
Bethany Seminary. He continues to serve as president
of the congregation in Linares. This fall, we hope to
begin online seminary training for two Chilean men.

Latvia — Work continues with a new evangelism and
apologetics center in a historic part of Old Town Riga.

Czechia — The leaders are preparing for in-person instruction at
Martin Luther School.

Ukraine — The counseling centers and medical clinics continue
looking for new ways of offering their services. Plans are underway for
upgrades and purchase of new equipment for the clinics.

How Can You Help?

— Pray for each of the mission fields,
for the national pastors of these
churches as well as for the members
of their congregations that often
do not welcome the Gospel of Jesus
Christ. Pray for these Christian
brothers and sisters who often do not
have the kind of medical care and
government help that is available
to most of us in the United States.
May the Lord continue to care for
them and strengthen their faith. May
God work all these challenges for
the good of his people, as he has
promised.

— Please—prayerfully consider a gift
or regular donation for the work in the
various fields. Every field, and some
more than others, have many needs
where God's people can provide
much needed assistance. You may
designate a gift to a particular field or
project on the memo line of a check.
You may also go to els.org and click
on "Donate" in the top banner on the
right-hand side.

— For more information please
contact us at the following:

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