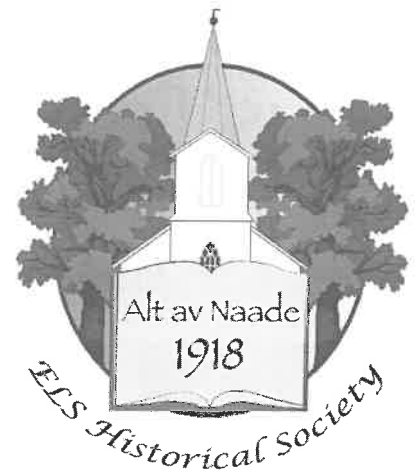


Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society



Volume 27

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Issue 4

MESSAGES FROM PERU

By James Olson

Prologue

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our Synod's mission work in Peru, South America, I wish to share messages from Peru around the theme of universal justification. The Means of Grace, that is, the Holy Scriptures and the Sacraments (Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper), create and sustain faith in the objective fact that God declared the world of sinners forgiven and saved, on account of the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ.



It was to an open court, that is the entire world, that God declared this universal love of His. He continues to declare it by His Word through the preaching and teaching of pastors and missionaries. God's teaching of objective justification continues to be effective, meaning, that people continue to come to faith in

Christ through the power of this teaching. "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes," Rom. 1,16. The very words of this verse point to faith as an effect of their power.

The Gospel of justification raises up faith in itself. This is saving faith! It is saving because of its object. Its object is Christ Jesus. Faith's object is saving, because

Christ is the Savior. He is the Savior of sinners from their sins.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life," Jn. 3,16. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not charging them with their sins," 2 Cor. 5,19.

This is what mission is all about, a mission to save sinners. The world is full of them. It is a mission to connect them with the pure marks of the Church. These are the means which Christ has clearly indicated are the instruments which produce faith in Christ. These same means nurture and preserve faith.

Where these means are taught in their truth and purity is where the Church of Christ is found. (Jn. 8,32; Eph. 2,19-22; Acts 4,11; Mk. 16,16; 1 Cor. 10,16; Rom. 10,17) The household of faith consists of people who believe in and follow these means. A truly Christian mission cannot be planted without these means.

Therefore, it can be said truthfully that the history of missions is the story of the movement of the Gospel. It goes from relative to relative, from congregation to the creation of a new congregation, from town to town, and from country to city and back again. It can, of course, go across boundaries, leaping linguistic and ethnic and cultural barriers, as the Book of Acts shows us. And all these things happened during the 50-year history of the movement of the Means of Grace in Peru.

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WHY IS THERE WHEAT IN THE FLOWER POT?



Visitors to the Ottesen Museum in the Winter months may have noticed interesting decorations in the flower pot at the building's entrance. Not surprising are branches of greenery and possibly even some pine cones. But why is there a sheaf of wheat propped up and waving in the breeze?

These sheafs are called *julenek* in Norwegian and are traditionally made of oats although wheat can be substituted if oats aren't available. Traditions vary as to when they are put out but they are always up by Christmas Eve.

The first record of them is from 1753 by Pastor Erik Pontoppidan. His comments make it clear that this was a much older custom, possibly even from pre-Christian times. Pontoppidan saw them as a beautiful gift to the birds and they are often seen as a Christmas present to them. Other pastors preached against *julenek* as a pagan custom meant to ward off the supernatural.

Eventually, Pontoppidan's view predominated and *julenek* became a common Christmas decoration in Norway and among Norwegian-Americans. We put them in the museum's flower pot as a nod to the ELS's Norwegian roots.



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Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance for publication. Articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication. Each issue will be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001*

Scandinavian Christmas Hymns

ELS Ottesen Museum
4 Browns Court
Mankato, MN

Tuesday, December 5, 2023
2:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Annual Open House

Facebook icon, Instagram icon

FROM THE EDITOR

Thanksgiving and Christmas Greetings to everyone.

I hope you can make it to the Christmas open house at the ELS Otteson Museum at 4 Browns Court in Mankato. It takes place on December 5 from 2:30-5:30 p.m. The theme is Scandinavian Christmas Hymns. There will be some sing-alongs. The annual Christmas open house at the museum has been a well-received event every year. Fun for everyone.

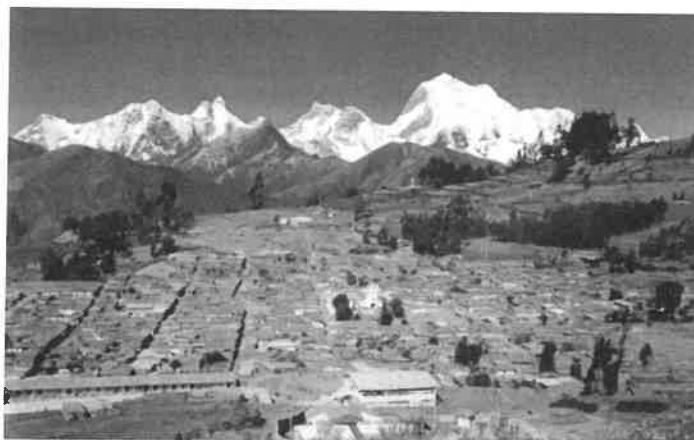
Included in this edition is a series of Messages from Peru written or compiled by Missionary James Olsen. He was one of the pioneer missionaries in Peru from 1970 to 1976. Several of the earlier missionaries to Peru have died in the past year, James Olsen in October 2022, David Lillegard in December 2022 and Helga Kuster in October 2023. The editor worked with missionaries Olsen and Lillegard, both on the field and as they were members of the Board for Missions, Board for Foreign Missions and Board for World Outreach. We appreciate the work that they did for our foreign missions in the ELS, and I appreciated their work as my predecessors. The mission field was prepared for the work that I ended up doing there.

Missionary Olsen prepared this document in 2018, the year we celebrated 50 years of the mission in Peru. Some of the words were written by him and some he reported as written by Peruvian Pastor Fidel Convercio. They also include information about the work of Pastor Oswaldo Fernandez. I was blessed to work with both Pastor Convercio and Pastor Fernandez during my years in Peru. These three men were instrumental in beginning the Andean mountain work of our mission in Peru.

Missionary Olsen went to Peru in 1970. He was the second ordained missionary to work there. He served until 1976. As he writes, he made the first trips by the ELS into the Andes mountains to evangelize and form the mountain congregations. He also did the first work of establishing

theological education for future pastors in Peru. After he left Peru he was elected to serve on the ELS Board for Missions. He served as the foreign field secretary (which is a kind of liaison between the missionaries and the Board) and was a member of the Board when I was called to serve in the Peru mission field in 1982. He returned to Peru as a missionary in 1991 and worked another year in Peru before being transferred to Chile, where he began the work of establishing our mission in Chile.

Thank you to Rebecca DeGarmeaux for her piece from the Otteson Museum. I encourage you again to visit the museum on December 5 for the Christmas Open House. I hope many of you can make it.



CIUDAD DE CHIQUIAN

This is the beautiful scenery of the area where Pastor Convercio worked with Pastor James Olsen. Pastor Fernandez evangelized in the area before he was ordained as a pastor. Chiquian is the city where the missionaries parked the car and continued to other villages on horseback or on foot.

The ELS Historical Society depends on the membership/subscription fee to fund our projects and produce Oak Leaves. Even without the annual meeting our work still goes on. If you pay your membership annually, you may send your check to

ELS Historical Society
6 Browns Ct.
Mankato, MN 56001.

A MESSAGE FROM ANCASH, PERU

When I began discussing the idea of writing some history of the Peru mission with Pastor Wayne Halvorson, member of the Board of World Missions, Latin American Division, I asked him what I should write. His reply was that I ought to write my story.

When winnowing a message into meaningful and helpful content I thought it should be shown that the Gospel message had indeed taken hold in Peruvian hearts.

“My story” was what the Mission Board representative said I ought to write, and an important part of the story, one I delight to tell, deals with two Peruvian men who became Pastors and three messages involving them. The first narrative deals with an evangelism trip I made with Pastor Fidel Convercio in the early 1970’s when he was still a relatively new Christian. Material for this story is taken from my diary of the trip and from a letter I wrote to my wife, Mary. The second message, written by Pastor Fidel Convercio, presents the history of the church in Ancash Region from 1971 to 2002. The third message tells the story of Pastor Oswaldo Fernandez’s first encounter with our mission, taken from the account written by my wife in a letter to her parents.



CONCERNING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF EVANGELISM

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,” (Ez. 34,12-13).

The call I accepted in 1970 to be a missionary to Peru stipulated that I should seek to begin a

theological training program. I sought to do this by identifying men in the congregations with skills which could be developed so that they could in time serve as pastors. Time was needed to form churches out of which future pastors could come. So, of necessity my efforts, and those of my missionary colleagues, in the earliest years, was the planting and establishment of congregations. One of my earliest students was Fidel Convercio, whom I instructed and confirmed in 1971, in the congregation I started in his home town of Pacllon. 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 21 years. He, along with several other people in Pacllon, made up the first class of confirmands who had studied Luther’s Small Catechism. Over the next two years or so, I instructed him from Luther’s Large Catechism, the Augsburg Confession and J.T. Mueller’s, Christian Dogmatics. (We also used these materials with some students in Lima after their confirmation.)

Quite often I invited Fidel to accompany me on visits to the homes of people in Pacllon to do family evangelism and we discussed the idea of visiting towns not far from Fidel’s home town of Pacllon; he suggested Llamac (Yah-mock) and Pocpa (Poke-pa).

The missionaries, together with the Board of missions, made a point of approaching the work in a way which was reproducible by the national church. I wanted to show Fidel an approach to evangelism which is simply face-to-face contact. I noted in my diary that we made this trip to Llamac and Pocpa, starting Sept. 17, 1973. (My companion 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)!

The narrative unfolds in a letter I composed over the next days written to my wife. Mary was in the U.S awaiting the birth of our sixth child. The greater portion of the letter to her reads as follows.

“This is the first missionary trip taken by Fidel Convercio. The planning and excitement this last week reminded me of anticipation before a vacation or the hunting season.

“(We were) not disappointed in Lamac, the first of the two stops we will make on this journey. Eighty-five people trudged through a drenching

down-pour of rain to hear us proclaim Christ and Him crucified.” Fidel Convercio presented Law and Gospel well, focusing on objective justification. I spoke on the same subject. The audience was attentive and invited us to return.

“Tomorrow morning we will analyze the day’s experience, along with seeing several families in house-to-house visits, as part of Fidel’s pre-seminary training.” On the following day, I added to my letter: “Our trip from Llamac to our next stop, Pocpa, was uneventful. We left Llamac, giving charge to two men there to receive and distribute materials which I will send them. The attendance of 85 people at the meeting last night was encouraging.

“Our hopes for a warm reception in Pocpa were dampened, however, when a man we met told us that others had tried unsuccessfully to preach the Gospel there. (Not even a letter of commendation Fidel carried to a certain Jose Sanchez helped: ‘No one will accept you here,’ said this man.)

“We decided to go ahead with plans to stay in the village and, if possible, hold a gathering. I had noticed the layout of the town seemed similar to towns around which haciendas (plantations) had been built. And I asked someone about this. ‘Yes,’ I was told, ‘this has always been a hacienda. We’ve all worked for little or nothing for the master, (hacendado). Generations of people have been treated like slaves, but no more. The hacendado has 24 hours to get out of town, by orders of government officials who have come. He’s packing today and leaving tomorrow.’”

I learned that an epidemic of pneumonia was sweeping the town. We talked with a number of people. 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. People learned from Fidel that I was a Lutheran pastor.

The letter continues: “Forty-five people assembled in the town hall. They, who had not permitted missionaries to address them before in a public meeting, listened with full attention.”

The film strip entitled “La Vida de Nuestro Senor, Jesucristo” (The Life of our Lord Jesus Christ), was first. I followed this with an address on objective

justification. Based on verses from the books of Galatians and Romans. Then, Fidel spoke in an address of about 45 minutes. He taught in greater depth than had I on the same topic of justification of the sinner. When he finished, I realized I had been reminded by God’s Law of my state as a sinner, but also by God’s Gospel of my justified state as a forgiven sinner. This was a very, very good message delivered to people whom I thought may not ever have heard the Gospel. The address became memorable also because it was taught by a 23-year-old who had been a believing Christian for a relatively short time, but who believed sincerely in God’s justifying grace and could explain it well. The assembly gave Fidel their complete attention.

Some in this audience did not speak Spanish well, and preferred Quechua, their tongue of “hearth, cradle and home.” It was likely that everyone present, including children, were bi-lingual, but 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.

These were touching moments! This part of the night’s ministry was beyond my powers, for I only knew Spanish. 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.

(While Fidel was preaching and when the concentration was fully on his message, there was the sound of a loud thud which came from the back of the room. A 12 or 13 year-old lad who had been sitting on a high bench, had fallen asleep. Suddenly, he pitched forward and with arms and legs extended, landed face-down on the floor. The group erupted in laughter. After some minutes, with good humor, people turned attention again to the topic.)

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, having gone to their home, following the meeting, by request of a certain Martin Gamara.

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. In part, because of this event and the pneumonia epidemic which was striking the elderly and the children, parents of three other children requested baptism and I baptized their youngsters the following day.

On this night, the seeds of the Gospel were planted in Pocpa. A tender plant sprouted as the result. For some years, the young church was nourished by materials which came by mail and by occasional visits from missionaries and Fidel. But one day, several years later, in 1991, Fidel was ordained into the holy ministry and became this congregation's pastor. He would have a multi-point parish, as we'll see.



CONCERNING HISTORY OF THE CHURCHES OF ANCASH

The administrative entity of Peru that is parallel to our "State" is "Region." Peru has 25 Regions. One of these is Ancash Region to which we now direct our attention. Each Region is made up of several Provinces. The Province of Bolognesi contains its capital, Chiquian (pop. 6,500 in 2015) and the District towns of Pacllon, Pocpa and Llamac where our missionaries worked. The city of Huaraz, pop. 127,000 (2015) is the capital of Ancash Region.

Pacllon and Chiquian and other towns lie at an altitude of between 10,000' and 11,000'. Foot paths join the scattered towns which are nestled among the peaks of a compact range of mountains. These are known as the Cordillera Huayhuash, only about 20 miles in length north to south, but which has many peaks having an altitude of around 20,000 ft. The

highest of these is Mt. Yerupaja (Yeh-roo-pah-hah) at 21,768 ft.

Our sister congregations of Ancash are served by pastors who arrive to do pastoral work on foot or horseback. There is vehicle travel available from Chiquian to the city of Huaraz.

In the following narrative written by Pastor Fidel Convercio, we see history come to life in the description of the movement of the Gospel from Lima to Pacllon and on to many districts of Ancash Region. The story spans a 30 year period. Fidel's original presentation was made by request of his fellow pastors and the ELS missionaries working in Peru in 2015. Pastor Convercio began his paper with the theological and scriptural base of Christian evangelism followed by his account of the Gospel's movement.



EVANGELIZATION AND FORMATION OF CONGREGATIONS IN THE SIERRA OF ANCASH

The greatest and noblest charge given by Christ to His disciples of all times is that of proclaiming to the world with boldness the great love He has for the human race. Christ wants that all may come to know the blessed news of this love and be saved (1 Tim. 2,4).

This was the purpose of His incarnation and sacrifice. He knew all along that man fallen in sin could not of himself re-establish a relationship with God, knowing also that since the fall sin became a part of man's nature, (Mark 7, 21-23). In the exercising of His holy ministry Christ said, 'The

Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19,10). And having finished the work of redemption of mankind which He planned in His unconditioned grace, He charged His disciples with this great commission: “Go through the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” Mk. 16,15.

For this work, while failing to comprehend the love of God for us, we cannot have the proper motivation for conducting some to Christ, (Rom. 5,8). The love of God in regard to us is the unique force for motivating us to heed the great commission.

Thus far Pastor Convercio’s presentation of the theological base for bringing the Gospel to others.

The presenter considered appropriate the inclusion of common-sense guidelines in which evangelism may operate. A part of this is Christian concern for the individual the evangelist wishes to address.

“For this sacred ministry we need time and total dedication. Sowing the blessed Gospel in the hearts of unbelievers is not easy. For this work, we need to use the abilities God gave. For example, the farmer needs to explore where best to plant and cultivate the ground on which may be rocks, thorns and bushes, so also, the evangelist needs to view the circumstances appropriate for presenting the word of God. Once we’ve made an appointment for study, we must prepare adequate time to carry it out.

“It’s important to form a friendship on a secular level. Be open to helping out in difficult situations. If we arrive (for an appointment) while the person is still working, lend a hand, in order to help build confidence in you.

After getting to know the entire family, it is time to ask if they would like to have a devotion from God’s word with you. Ask them if they know other families who may also like this. Perhaps you will find they already know someone

else who knows the Gospel with whom they are friends. Perhaps then a larger gathering can be gained. Then try setting a time and day for another meeting.”

It is worthy of mention that Pastor-evangelist Convercio early in his ministry watched for men who seemed to have potential to become church leaders and ministers. This continued on through his years of service.

“In this process we can be on the look-out for someone in one of the families who may have an aptitude for becoming a future leader whom we may instruct in the (Christian) doctrine. Give such a person the respect which corresponds with becoming one more companion in the work of (sharing/teaching) the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. It is important that a leader be situated with his family in his own home town.



EVANGELIZATION IN ANCASH, BOLOGNESI

“The pioneer evangelist of the Ancash sierra was the missionary, Jaime Olsen, citizen of the U.S.A. In 1970, he made contact with two of my friends (in Lima), and when they returned at mid-year, they said to me with much enthusiasm: we have found a good religion. A gringo pastor has told us from the Bible, that salvation is a gift of God and not by keeping the law of the commandments, not even by prohibiting the eating of pork or cuy, as the adventists teach. He has promised to come to Chiquian.

“In April of 1971, Missionary Olsen came to Chiquian, having invited these friends (Juan

Avalos and Porfirio Ibarra) with Olsen at his place of accommodation for two days to visit him there.

I went with them (from Pacllon) and we studied.

“In 1972 I went to Lima with a friend for temporary summer work at the Club Regatas (Yacht Club) in Lima. There Pastor Olsen came to invite us to supper at his house. He then proposed we could live with him and his family during the (summer) season for three months and study doctrine each day until time to go to work.

“In April of 1973, when Missionary Olsen came to Pacllon, we organized the congregation more formally with a Board of Directors, (Junta Directiva). From that point on I was charged with leadership of the group. We began to have contact with other of the missionaries.

“In 1976 I went with Missionary Olsen to the town of Llamac, arriving at the home of

Norberto Carrera, a friend. We visited at length and he showed great interest in the Gospel. Then we agreed on my (Fidel) continuing to come for visits. Thus we continued to the point of forming the group with Missionary Daniel McMiller. Often we made the trip walking, without a mount. The distance from Pacllon to Llamac is about 13 km's (8 ½ miles).

“In 1978 we extended the work to the village of Pocpa with Missionary J. Olsen. We were accommodated in the home of a man we knew, Martin Gamarra, and we stayed two days. There the pastor baptized a young girl, the daughter of Felisimo Gomero. It would be some years before we returned. We received the bad news that the town had decided not to give welcome to any religion except the (Roman) Catholic.

“In 1982 I formed a friendship with Tomas Aldave in Pacllon (who now is a firm member of the church). Tomas was employed at the hacienda of Quiscapu, associated with the town of Quero. We agreed on meeting with his whole family in Quero. Then my wife and I began making regular visits to meet with them at the hacienda. Here we made contact with Ruben Aldave, the son of Tomas. The distance from Pacllon to Quero is approximately 23 km's (just over 14 miles). Thus the mission work continued forward.

In 1987 my sons moved to Chiquian to continue their studies at the secondary level, and I had opportunity then for contact with families we knew secularly, who were not affiliated with the church: Alejos, Damian, Zubieta, and Aguirre & Velasquez. We studied every so often with them in their homes.

In 1990 we began holding classes in the house in Chiquian which I had rented for my sons' quarters while they attended secondary school. There our brother in the faith, Oswaldo Fernandez, brought from Llamac five persons prepared for confirmation, and together we conducted the service of confirmation. Brother Fernandez, before entering the seminary, worked as manager (mayordomo) of the hacienda owned by the Roman Catholic congregation of Chiquian. Despite the fact that the local priest was his employer, Oswaldo identified himself as Lutheran, and he did what he felt was necessary and right when he baptized several young people, children of the hacienda workers. It is worthy to remember the courageous work of this brother.

“In 1991 we formally organized the Pocpa congregation. We traveled to Pocpa at this time, disguised as seed potato sales people. By this time we had developed friendship with the two families Ramirez and Liberato. And now the town was not so drastic in attitude toward non-catholic teaching as was the case earlier. In another visit later, I brought film strips regarding the universal flood and about the prophet Elijah to show the people. I showed these in the house of our brother in the faith, Herminio. In another visit still later I asked the president of the community for the use of a large public room and we invited everyone. Thus we became better known. With those to whom we felt were closest to us and to our teaching, we continued forming the group.

“And so in this manner we went about matters involved in strengthening the (older) congregations at Pacllon, Llamac and Pocpa. Meanwhile the (newer) group at Quero continued its formation. I must thank my wife for her constant support and good will and her parents who loaned me the use of their horses for many trips.” (Fidel's in-laws had special designations of endearment for these mounts, calling them their

“missionary horses!”)

“In 1992 I was ordained as pastor of the congregations I’ve mentioned. In April that year I extended my ministry to Huaraz. I traveled also to a village in the valley of Huaylas to a town named Yacu Raquina in order to evangelize the parents and relatives of Alfonso Lliuya. He was a member of one of the congregations in Lima, located in the barriada known as Santa Anita, pastored by Missionary Dan McMiller. It was he (Pastor McMiller) who asked me to visit Yacu.

“I went there (Yacu) carrying a letter of recommendation from Alfonso’s son. We conversed in Quechua. Things appeared favorable to this man, whose name is Hipolito. We agreed I should come to bring them the Gospel monthly. On the second visit there, along with my wife, there were 19 people gathered for worship. On another occasion, I went together with our brother Oswaldo Fernandez and Alfonso (who had come from Lima). On this occasion we also traveled to the town of Vicus to see a relative of Afonso’s. We went to the health center, where he lay gravely ill with cholera. Later, along with Pastor Daniel McMiller, we traveled many times to this zone, arriving also to a remote town named Atogh Pampa, for there lived another son of Hipolito.

“A great disappointment occurred in 1992. Some families stopped coming to our gatherings in Atogh Pampa and I began home visits, house after house, to try to determine why this happened. I learned that a Pentecostal pastor had come evangelizing, whom some in the community killed, because they said he had insisted that they must reject religious use of an image of Christ on the cross... The image was carried through the town at the time of religious fiestas. I learned that the wife of the man killed had come to the village herself and went about imploring with tears, making people aware of the danger they were in; they believed her and stopped coming to our services (although we had nothing to do with any of it).

“At about this time Hipolito became ill and he was brought to the house of his nephew in Huaraz. From here on I visited (him) in Huaraz, where others

introduced me to additional families, whom I visited in their homes. They are Juan Evaristo, Gilberta Salas, Hugo Evaristo and Luisa Lliuya.

“In 1993 I met with the other families in Huaraz, namely, Cano, Trejo and Miranda, and we formed the group in Huaraz.

“In 1998, enlarging the work, we went to the town of Carcas. We met with Alfonso Padilla, whom we had gotten to know in Chiquian, when he looked for quarters to rent for his daughter attending high school. We gave her a room and in time invited her to watch VHS videos of Bible Stories. We began studying doctrine with her and loaned her videos to bring to show her parents (in Carcas). Subsequently we went to Carcas to visit them and there made contact with an additional family as well, that of Alberto Palacios. Thus was started the work in Carcas.

“In the year 2001, strengthening of the Huaraz congregation occurred. We rented quarters at a location for worship, with economic help from the mission. This subsidy could not be continued and we resumed our church services at the home of the family Cano. At the present time we are gathering in the home of our brother in the faith, Areli Convercio, and his family, and with others.

“After meeting informally for some years, the church at Quero was organized in 2005.”

Fidel writes that here at Quero and also at the nearby Quiscapo hacienda were families he hadn’t known previously, who became members of the congregation. These were the families Barrenechea, Martin, Ruben and Antaurco.

“Thus God blessed us to be able to include new families of Quiscapo and Quero.

“In 2006 we came to the town of Roca by invitation from people we’d befriended in Chiquian. We evangelized various families.”

Then Fidel ends his pastoral conference presentation

rather abruptly with these telling words: "We lack workers so that we may continue instruction with these people and support the devotion of the people." Fidel closed his paper with expressions of gratefulness that missionaries had brought the Gospel to Peru. At the bottom of the last page of this paper, Fidel wrote in longhand, these words: "This topic I presented at a pastoral conference in accord with the request of the others."

Pastor Fidel Convercio, Lima, April 11, 2015.



A MESSAGE WHICH INFLUENCED A FUTURE PASTOR

Early one morning in July, 1974, a lone figure might have been spotted striding along a path among the giant peaks of the Huayhuash Mountains, heading towards Chiquian along the path from Llamac. Without looking, he was aware of the variegated plots of alfalfa, maize and potatoes clinging to the mountain sides in garden-sized plots, the fields of fellow townsmen. At differing times, but sometimes simultaneously, this man was a farmer, cattle buyer-seller, hacienda manager and professional mountain guide. Expeditions of mountain climbers and skiers came from far-away places in Germany, France, Switzerland and Norway and they contracted this man as a guide. He was one of several expert local guides hired to help people scale Mt. Yerupaja and other smaller giants. This man is Oswaldo Fernandez and on this day he is heading for Chiquian where he has to attend to some business.

However, like Simon of Cyrene, while heading one direction, he is turned around to an entirely different destination, and like Simon, he comes close to the Savior, though of course not physically. Soon, on the trail, he meets a contingent of people traveling on the path from Pacllon, heading also for Chiquian. They tell him they plan to travel the next day to Lima. They

say they are planning to attend a conference in Lima and that he should consider coming along with them. What is the conference about, how many days will it last and who is sponsoring it, he wants to know? "The missionaries who started our new church in Pacllon are hosting it", they said. And I imagine they may well have given him a general idea of the main topic they would hear about and discuss. ("Divine Justification of The Sinful World.") The conference is for five days, they added. Oswaldo became convinced by them and turned back towards home in Llamac to fetch clothing and food for the trip. He left the group telling them he'd see them on the truck in the morning.

Sometime in late July, 1974, in Watertown, WI, Mary's parents read the letter she wrote to them about the conference.

"We just had an interesting week: The Ancash Congreso (conference). The missionaries hosted it at the Mission House in San Gabriel. Sixteen adults and a few of their children came from Ancash to spend a week of studying and singing and fellowship. Fifteen were from Pacllon and one from Llamac. This fellow came along on a whim but was converted at the congreso and is now very eager to bring the Gospel to his home town. Oswaldo Fernandez is the man's name. I hope you'll be hearing a lot more about him. The Biblical instruction was on Justification (by Jim) and Christian Sanctification (by Robert Moldstad). All of the Pacllon people were already members of the church, but they all said they learned so much more and were grateful for the opportunity. Vicki Miller taught parents (in a daily class) on the matter of teaching their children God's word."

Classes were five hours each day. Oswaldo and Fidel Convercio and others had many questions to discuss with the missionaries in the off-hours. Before the conference ended, Oswaldo began wondering aloud if the missionaries could help him by reproducing more materials which he could bring with him along home. Indeed, this occurred, and Oswaldo gathered people in Llamac and read to them and explained what he had learned about justification by grace etc. I sent him more materials in succeeding months. We missionaries believed it was of significance if people could witness one of their own being enthused about the Gospel and be willing and able to aid their understanding.

These events of 1974 marked for Oswaldo the beginning of a long trek along a path of study resulting in graduating seminary. He was assigned to the congregation in Huacho, congregation which he helped plant over the years as lay leader and student-pastor. In 1996 Oswaldo became the ordained shepherd of this flock.

We may conclude that the Gospel took hold in the hearts of Peruvians in Ancash Region, in several towns. The messages about situations outlined above give us a small slice of work done. There is, as Pastor Convercio indicated, much more to be done.

The same God who spoke to Israel speaks through His word today to us and to Peruvians: "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains... I will feed my flock and make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek what was lost," and He finds them where they are and calls them through His precious teaching of justification by grace. (Ezekiel 34; Ps. 80; Jn. 10; Rom. 3.)

In John 1, 35-51, Christ our Lord teaches us that He will have a people that is His own through faith. Christ calls upon this people to join him in his concern for those who don't know him yet. (Matt. 10; Luke 10,1-12; Matt. 28, 18-20; Mark 16,15; 1 Peter 2, 9-10) And to serve their Savior in this way, His people shall be willing. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow Me." (Jn. 10,27.) We hear the voice of our Shepherd saying to use words like these: as you go about your life as my sheep, share what you know about me with others, for I want to be their shepherd, as well as yours. (Matt. 28,18-20; 1 Pet. 2,9-10; Jn. 10,27)

Objective justification is the chief teaching of the Scriptures which tell us that God, who had loved us so much that he gave his only begotten Son to be our Savior, has for the sake of Christ's substitutionary atonement declared the entire world of sinners forgiven and saved. Rom. 5,17-21. This is the message Fidel and Oswaldo, and other Peruvians heard and believed and have been sharing within the 50-year history of the Peru mission.

Being justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Christ

Jesus, how may we like our Peruvian brothers, not speak what we know? (Rom. 3,18)

The above has dealt chiefly with congregation planting in one part of the Peru, while work in other areas, notably, Lima and Amazon Region was also going on. Conclusions about the work in these other areas are similar.

Summary remarks which seem appropriate follows: 1. A lot can happen in 50 years. Several congregations and pastors were added by our Lord to His church through the congregations planted in Ancash Region, Peru. "He (our Savior, Jesus Christ), "will clothe the priests of the new Zion with salvation, and we the saints of Zion, will rejoice," Ps. 132,9. 2. The doctrine of the Holy Scriptures was passed from believers in one culture and country to people of another culture and country. A mother church formed a daughter church. A Lutheran Synod planted a Lutheran Synod. 3. The Church of Christ, the church of true believers, which form His body on earth, was extended. The reason is because the pure marks of the church were used in planting new congregations. Grace alone, scripture alone and faith alone were preached by missionaries and in turn, then, by their students. As well, universal justification, Christian sanctification, Law and Gospel were preached.

Finally, because we are so deeply interested in the preservation of the Gospel in newer Lutheran congregations, it must be the case that we treat them as a mother treats her mature daughters. She listens when listening is needful. She encourages when consolation is requisite. She advises when asked. She warns if danger is real and near, especially if anything threatens the pure marks of the church and the three solas. Above all, she loves. "Even as I have loved you, so love one another,"

James P. Olsen

P. em

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