

THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2010

AMBASSADOR

SUFFER
FOR **HIS**
NAME



Catching

BY MARCUS DAHL



men

Some of you might be familiar with the children's song, "I will make you fishers of men, if you follow me." Most of us are familiar with the Bible verse, "... from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10b). However, the verses that precede these are what I spent a lot of time considering this summer.

In Luke's account, Simon Peter spent the night out fishing and laboring with his fellow workers. Depleted of energy, he washed his nets and prepared them as he listened to someone preach. This someone would soon become Peter's Lord and the master of his life. The teacher boarded Peter's boat and led them out to the shallow part of the lake where He taught those left on shore. Afterward, Jesus told Peter to bring his boat to deeper water and let down his nets, where Peter took in an enormous haul of fish.

To Peter, this was an overwhelming miracle. Falling down on his knees before Jesus, Peter said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Like Peter, I am a sinful man. Like Peter, I need to confess to Jesus that I am sinful. Jesus is holy and in Him is no darkness at all. When I confess my sin and ask for forgiveness, He replaces my sinfulness with His holiness (II Corinthians 5:21).

Do you have the assurance that all of your sins have been completely forgiven on the cross—even the ones that no one else on earth knows about? Let me remind you that we are saved by grace, not by works, lest no man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Christian life is lived in response to this forgiveness. And I am becoming more and more convinced that evangelism

is an important part of that response. Notice that it wasn't until after Peter confessed his sin that Jesus' invited him to become a fisher of men. Peter himself wrote about this response in I Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to give an answer

to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

I was given the privilege of speaking at a camp this summer. The theme was "Bringing Camp to the Outside World." I didn't spend five days providing Bible tracts, memorized presentations, or other evangelistic tools. Instead, the majority of the time was spent learning about who the Lord is, who we are without Him, and who we are when we give our lives to Him.

Reflect on what Christ has done in your life. How would you be different without knowing Him? Remind yourself, awaken yourself to the truth that your sins are forgiven through Jesus. Spend time on this. When you do, I pray that your heart will spill over with words and love for others, and that in response you will tell people about Jesus.

I recently heard in a "Perspectives" class that evangelism is a form of public worship. We are publicly confessing Jesus Christ as Lord when we speak to people about what Christ has done in our own lives. In Christ, your sins have been forgiven. Become a fisher of men!

Dahl, a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, is a student at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Plymouth, Minn.

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I am ready to die for my Lord; that in my blood the Church may obtain liberty and peace.

—Thomas Becket
Martyred 1170

I wish I could tell you that persecution is waning, that our brothers and sisters are being treated with fairness and justice. Instead, I must tell you that persecution of Christians is more common in our generation than ever in history.

—Tom White
Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs

I have committed no crime. The only reason why I am put to death is that I have been preaching the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very happy to die for such a cause.

—Paul Miki
Martyred 1597

Be not afraid at His sweet, lovely and desirable cross, for although I have not been able because of my wounds to lift up or lay down my head, yet I was never in better care all my life.

—John Nesbit
Martyred 1685



ONE HUNDRED MILLION CHRISTIANS

around the globe are currently suffering persecution for their faith. Most often persecution takes the form of imprisonment, abuse, and hostilities. In some cases, however, Christians are asked to face more than scorn, prison, or the loss of health—they are asked to face death.

These individuals are the Christian martyrs of our faith. Jesus said in Matthew 10:39, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

During the first century, almost all of Jesus’ disciples suffered martyrdom for His sake. Peter was crucified upside down, Mark was torn to pieces, and Paul was beheaded. As Christianity spread throughout Europe and the British Isles, countless numbers of Christians were tortured and burned at the stake. And few can forget the moving story of Jim Elliot and four others who ventured into the Ecuadorian jungle, never to return.

This history reminds us of the great price that belief in God may demand and the great impact that such a sacrifice can have.

But that history has not ended.

Today there are still many Christian martyrs, those who give their life for their faith. Every year and on every continent men and women face death because of their belief in Jesus Christ. They are the Christian martyrs of this century; the fathers, mothers, grandparents, and children who have lost their lives for the sake of the gospel. Around the world the light of their testimonies continues to shine. Their impact is immeasurable and their stories should not be forgotten.

Reprinted with permission by Open Doors, a ministry that serves persecuted Christians worldwide.



WE ARE OFTEN ASKED

at The Voice of the Martyrs to provide statistics regarding the extent of persecution faced by Christians around the world. How many are killed every year? How many in each country? How many are imprisoned in China/Vietnam/Egypt/etcetera? Of what denomination? One of the strangest requests I ever received was when I was actually asked to supply the names of all of the Christians who had died in the previous 12 months!

In our FAQ section of our Web site, we address the common question, “How many Christians are killed for their faith every year?” Here’s how we answer:

The persecution facing Christians is the largest “human rights” violation issue in today’s world. However, it is impossible to know with absolute certainty the exact number of Christians who are killed each year for their faith.

According to the World Evangelical Alliance, more than 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith. David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing in their 2009 report in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Vol. 33, No. 1: 32) estimate that approximately 176,000 Christians will have been martyred from mid-2008 to mid-2009. This, according to the authors, compares to 160,000 martyrs in mid-2000 and 34,400 at the beginning of the 20th century. If current trends continue, Barrett, Johnson and Crossing estimate that by 2025, an average of 210,000 Christians will be martyred annually.

It is worth noting, however, that many have asked whether the figures cited by the annual Barrett/Johnson/Crossing reports are reliable. Indeed, many persecution experts have concluded that they are untenable. Queries to the researchers have shown that these figures are, in fact,

projected averages or statistical guesses rather than based on hard figures or actual documentation. Hence, it should be understood that The Voice of the Martyrs does not stand behind this report’s findings as being indisputable facts.

The fact is, despite our modern technology making today’s world a much smaller place, much of today’s persecution still takes place in remote areas of countries often cut off from or with restricted access to modern communications. Most martyrs suffer and die anonymously, unknown, forgotten, their deaths unrecorded except in heaven. Even using e-mail, which most of us consider a basic everyday tool, is a struggle in places like Ethiopia, Burma, and much of central Africa. Even where it is more readily available, it is not secure. Much goes unreported or is reported months, even years later. For many, persecution is such a part of life that it hardly dawns on the afflicted to tell the world. Many are nervous about sharing what they know for fear of retribution. That assumes, of course, that those who are persecuted know or have access to someone or an organization like The Voice of the Martyrs. All have limited resources and staff for documentation and research purposes. None probably feel that they have adequate representation in any given country. And sadly, the sharing of information and contacts between organizations is still in its infancy, despite improvements in recent years.

In short, I suggest that persecution, by its very nature, defies being statistically analyzed with any degree of certitude.

By the late Glenn Penner, former CEO of The Voice of the Martyrs. Article courtesy of The Voice of the Martyrs—Canada/www.persecution.net. Reprinted from his April 2009 blog, “The Limits of Statistics,” with permission.





PAVEL UHORSKAI

By Viola Fronkova

was born March 2, 1919, in Tomasovce, Slovakia. His childhood was lived in poverty, the son of Slovak farmers, yet rich with the Word of God in the Lutheran Church. He later became an excellent student of the Lutheran theology faculty in Bratislava (capital of Slovakia), where he began to understand the great need and importance of evangelism and mission within the Church and society—especially after years of fascism, World War II, and the beginning years of communism.

In 1947 he was called as a Lutheran pastor in the town called Haj. He immediately trained about 50 lay coworkers to do all the church and mission duties in Haj and its surrounding area.

Communist leaders, who had taken over in the country, did not like such an active mission life. They considered it an opposition which could damage their atheist ideology and the spread of communism. They arrested Pavel and interrogated him. He endured much physical and mental torture while he defended his faith. He was always truthful and straightforward with his interrogators:

“I did do mission work in various youth organizations according to the requirements of my pastoral call, in which these duties were spelled out,” wrote Uhorskai in his book *Uncompromising Faith, One Man’s Notes From Prison*. “I was thereby training young people in the spirit of the Gospel. Since that is the primary obligation of the church, it could not have been a criminal offense. The church is not outlawed in our country. The church is biblical, and the Bible is not banned. If this were the case, one would have to condemn all pastors, catecheses, church members, and all believers, for they are all as ‘guilty’ as I am.”

He took his years in prison as an opportunity to spread the gospel among fellow prisoners. Granted amnesty in 1953, he still continued as a “punished” criminal, forced to work as a woodchopper, with no civil rights for the next five years. After this time was over, he still could not serve in the church as a pastor. The official church, under Communist state control, was afraid to take back into the service such a servant of the Lord.

“I did not see then—nor for a long time thereafter—the true Church in the leadership of the church. I find the Church present only where Christ Himself is present,” wrote Uhorskai of those years.

He worked most of his active life with a building company. He also worked secretly with other persecuted brothers preparing for the change in his nation’s leadership, just in case that next week the Lord God would push aside communism. And the Lord God did. After 40 years, in 1990, Uhorskai was elected the General Bishop of the Slovak Lutheran Church. He led the church mightily, reminding fellow believers, that “speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

Now more than 90 years old, Brother Pavel lives in his native Tomasovce pri Lucenci in Slovakia, with his sister and her family.

VIOLA FRONKOVA

Though Viola Fronkova had grown up in a Christian home in Liptovsky Kokava, north central Slovakia, her faith had grown cold and her heart hard by the time she was ready for university. An exceptional student and considered a faithful Communist, Viola was given permission to study at Oxford University. While there, a faithful Christian professor took her to church every Sunday and then home for dinner after church. Through his witness she accepted Jesus and became a faithful disciple.

Her government offered Viola a very good job with the city upon her arrival home. But before the meeting ended, she told them, “I have something I need to tell you. I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Communist boss was furious. “You will be in my office tomorrow!” he shouted.

When Viola arrived, full of fear and trembling, the boss closed the door and told her, “Viola, I am a secret believer. I want to tell you I admire your courage.”

Viola got the job and became a very active participant in the underground church. After the fall of Communism, because of her faithfulness to Jesus and because she speaks about six languages, Viola was asked to become Bishop Uhorskai’s foreign secretary. That was when we met Viola for the first time. She became the leader of the first evangelistic Lutheran radio ministry in Slovakia called Mass Media. Her ministry became the rallying center for many believers in Slovakia.

Viola currently leads a ministry to Gypsy people in Slovakia. She is much loved and respected by people all over the country and many in other parts of the world.

By Pastor Don Richman, Bloomington, Minn., former director of East European Missions Network.

IN HIS FINAL LETTER

By Jerrell Hein

before his death, the apostle Paul gave his spiritual son, Timothy, instructions to live by and to teach others. Paul's instructions in II Timothy 3:12 are a picture of the situation that would develop in the last days—the time before Christ's second coming—a time of difficulty for the church when evil men would abound:

“For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power,” writes Paul (II Timothy 3:2-5).

When these evil men encounter faithful Christians who are walking in the Spirit, displaying a life of godliness, and proclaiming that every man needs repentance from sin and faith toward God in order to be saved, there will be an inevitable result—the persecution of the saints.

We are living in the last days; it is important for us to realize that these words apply to us, and that we need to pay close attention to them for our own good. Why?

If we do not know that we should expect persecution as Christians, then when persecution comes, we may doubt God and even deny our faith in Him. History shows that when persecution flares up, many professing believers fall away, not having understood that persecution is part of the normal Christian life. In our day, the Prosperity Gospel, which teaches that Christians can expect health, wealth, and the end of all their problems, leads its followers into a trap of disillusionment and despair if they face persecution. Knowing that persecution is to be expected protects us from this deception and prepares us for any circumstances.

The Scriptures teach us, also, that God uses persecution to test and refine our faith. When some of the first century believers underwent persecution, Peter reminded them: “... now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:6-7).

Trials and tribulations cause us to cry out to God and to learn to depend on Him. Just as rigorous physical training builds up the strength and endurance of an athlete, persecution builds up a believer's spiritual strength and endurance. When trials come,

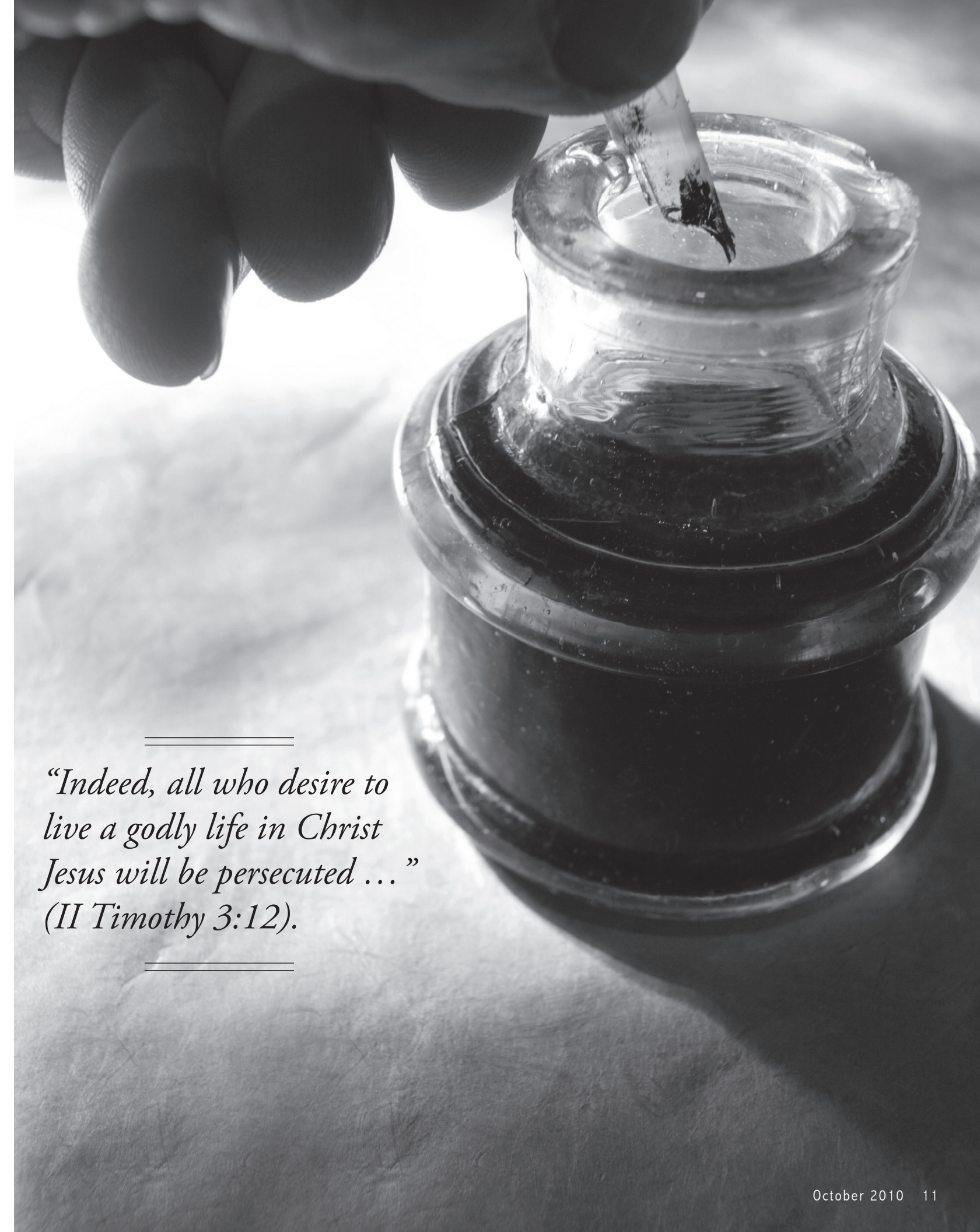
more time will be spent in prayer, fasting, meditation on God's Word, and caring for one another. We see the evidence of this spiritual vitality in the world today as persecuted Christians in hostile nations are some of the most enthusiastic and evangelistic believers in the world, spreading the gospel against much opposition.

The statement, “All who live a godly life will be persecuted,” should cause us to ask ourselves whether or not we have experienced any persecution for our Christian faith. If not, is this because we are not living the kind of godly life Paul was talking about? A vibrant faith that includes sharing the gospel, practicing wholesome living, displaying modesty, standing up for justice and the defense of the helpless, and opposing evil will, sooner or later, encounter hatred and opposition. If we have not experienced opposition for our Christian witness, then we should consider again Jesus' words: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Knowing that persecution is normal for those living godly lives should lead us to seek fellowship with those suffering for their faith. When we get to know those who are suffering most severely, we will find inspiring examples of simple faith, which spurs us on to a deeper walk with God. We will also find many opportunities to love our brothers by helping them and praying for them. Many have commented that they have received more than they gave when they became actively involved in helping Christians living in hostile nations.

The Scriptures state plainly that those living godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Meditating upon and then acting upon this statement can protect us from falling away during trials, can help us understand how God matures us in our faith, can cause us to examine our own Christian witness, and can lead us into fellowship with those believers suffering persecution. We will learn that, while painful, trials and tribulations for our faith produce excellent fruit for the kingdom of God.

Jerrell Hein, from San Marcos, Texas, is enrolled at AFLTS, and is a regional volunteer speaker for Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com), a ministry working on behalf of the persecuted church.



*“Indeed, all who desire to
live a godly life in Christ
Jesus will be persecuted ...”
(II Timothy 3:12).*

TRADITION *SAYS* THAT CHRISTIANITY

By Pastor D. Luther Sastry

reached India 2000 years ago. One of Jesus' disciples, Thomas called Didymus, went to India when he received the Great Commission from our Lord. Tradition says that he was killed by some Hindus near Tamilnadu in South India. Since then, there are many stories about martyrdoms in the history of the Church in India.



For the last 10 years we as Indian Christians have noticed that the persecution of Christians is growing rapidly in many parts of India. Some have been killed for their belief and many of them have been persecuted in other ways—physically and mentally. India is a secular country according to its constitution. But Christians are not free to preach the gospel or exercise their faith in some parts of India. In those parts, Christians do not even have the freedom to build church buildings. If they want a place for worship, it has to be a house, but not a church building that holds a cross on top.

The average believer in Christ cannot understand why there is discrimination in a secular country. The Indian government, which is elected by people, at the same time shows discrimination. If a person who belongs to a lower caste accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior, immediately that person will lose all of his benefits, such as scholarships and jobs in the government sector. These people are being mentally and physically persecuted.

If an upper caste Hindu person converts into Christianity and he or she is the only one converted from their family, then he or she has to face many difficulties by other family members.

A lady named Padma, who belongs to an upper caste in Kothapet of Chirala, converted into Christianity, but her husband and children did not. Fifteen years ago, when she was seriously ill and had been hospitalized, a man of God unexpectedly visited the hospital and prayed for her and for other patients. Within a few days, Padma recovered her health. Since then she has worshiped Jesus Christ as one of the gods. However, as the days went on, the Lord Jesus opened her heart. She started reading the Bible secretly and going to a nearby church without the notice of her family members. Slowly she started meeting her same caste believers in the church and invited them to her home so that her family members would know that there are believers in their same caste, too. But when her family members came to know that those people were converted into Christianity, they started hating them and warned Padma not to go with them anymore. But she kept on having fellowship with them and started praying with them for her salvation. The local pastor of that church came to know that she had faith in Jesus Christ, so he preached the salvation message to her and one day she was baptized.

When Padma's family members came to know that she was baptized, they tortured her for many days and strictly warned her not to go to church anymore. As an Indian lady who depends upon her husband's earnings, Padma remained at home and did not go to church. However, her family could not stop her from reading the Bible at home and praying to God. As she showed obedience to her husband and started praying for her family members, they stopped persecuting her.

Two years ago my wife, Vardhini, came to know about Padma and started visiting her many times. Padma's daughter is an expert in computers. So when Vardhini went to Padma's house one day her daughter asked Vardhini for a job in St. Paul's Lutheran School. My wife told her that there was a vacancy in the school. Immediately she applied for a job and has worked in the school for some time. During that time Padma and her family members have come to know about our AFLC. As Vardhini and I started counseling these family members, so Padma is now in peace.

Now Padma's husband is also going to church. We hope and pray that he and their children would come to the knowledge of salvation very soon.

Sastry, the president of the AFLC-India, lives in Chirala, Andhra Pradesh, India.



THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

By Pastor Ray Ballmann

is one the great human rights issues of our time. In its gross form, some estimate that more than 200 million Christians across the globe face death, imprisonment and torture because of their faith. They live in countries hostile to the gospel. They endure mocking, looting, home burning, slavery, starvation, imprisonment, being orphaned, kidnapped, forced to marry, widowed, and even martyred. Furthermore, Christians in more than 60 countries are not free to share the love of Christ with others without retribution and persecution.

Yet persecution is far more than a human rights issue; it's a spiritual issue. My heart aches because so few believers seem to know the extent of suffering or pray regularly for those who suffer for Christ. Where is the concern? Where is the passionate prayer? Where is the moral outrage? Reversal of this plight within our churches begins with education and remembrance. Scripture teaches, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Hebrews 13:3). The Church is the people of God spread around the world. When our brothers and sisters hurt, we should hurt. We must not forget them. More than that, we should do what we can to help them. But what can we do?

First, get informed by reading books and magazines on the topic. Two excellent books are *Faith that Endures*, by Ronald Boyd-Macmillan and *Standing Strong Through the Storm*, by Paul Estabrooks and Jim Cunningham. You may also download informational podcasts at www.persecutionpodcast.com.

Second, encourage your church to participate each year in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) usually held each November. There are ample resources available (www.idop.org) for you or your church. IDOP is a great time to pray and remember, but we must remember our brothers and sisters year round, and not just one Sunday a year.

Third, it is helpful to take the initiative to give regular reports and updates at your church. Information is readily available online at the Web sites of Voice of the Martyrs and Open Doors. Here you will find a rich reservoir of information and ideas about how you can help.

Fourth, keep the need visible at your church by making use of posters and wall charts. VOM has a beautiful full-color banner that is suitable for hanging in church. The banner has a map of the world and shows the persecution "hot spots" that need to be kept in regular prayer.

Fifth, invite a speaker to talk to your church on the subject of persecution. VOM maintains a speaker's bureau that has someone near your city ready, willing and able to come and speak on the subject. Simply visit VOM's Web site (www.persecution.com), click on "speaker," and put in the date you would like a speaker, and they will secure one for you. It's that simple.

Sixth, take time to write letters—both to those being persecuted to encourage them, as well as letters to governments that are engaging in or tolerating the persecution. At www.prisoneralert.com you can find the names and background of those you can write to along with an online language translator so that the persecuted believer can read your letter of encouragement in his own language.

Seventh, ask your pastor to show a DVD in church or Sunday school on the subject. VOM has several short ones that will work well within that context. *Stephen's Test of Faith* is appropriate for all age groups. Two other excellent video clips that provoke thought and serve as a call to prayer are *Alex* and *Sarah's Trail of Blood*. While they are not filled with gore, they are best viewed by those who are age-appropriate. Your pastor can preview each video.

Eighth, have church drives to support the persecuted with their

spiritual and humanitarian needs. Our church has participated in VOM's Blankets of Love and Action Packs programs, and we even made parachutes for one of their Bible and gospel literature drops in Columbia. Not only did the project bring the church together for a common purpose of helping the persecuted, we had a great time in the process.

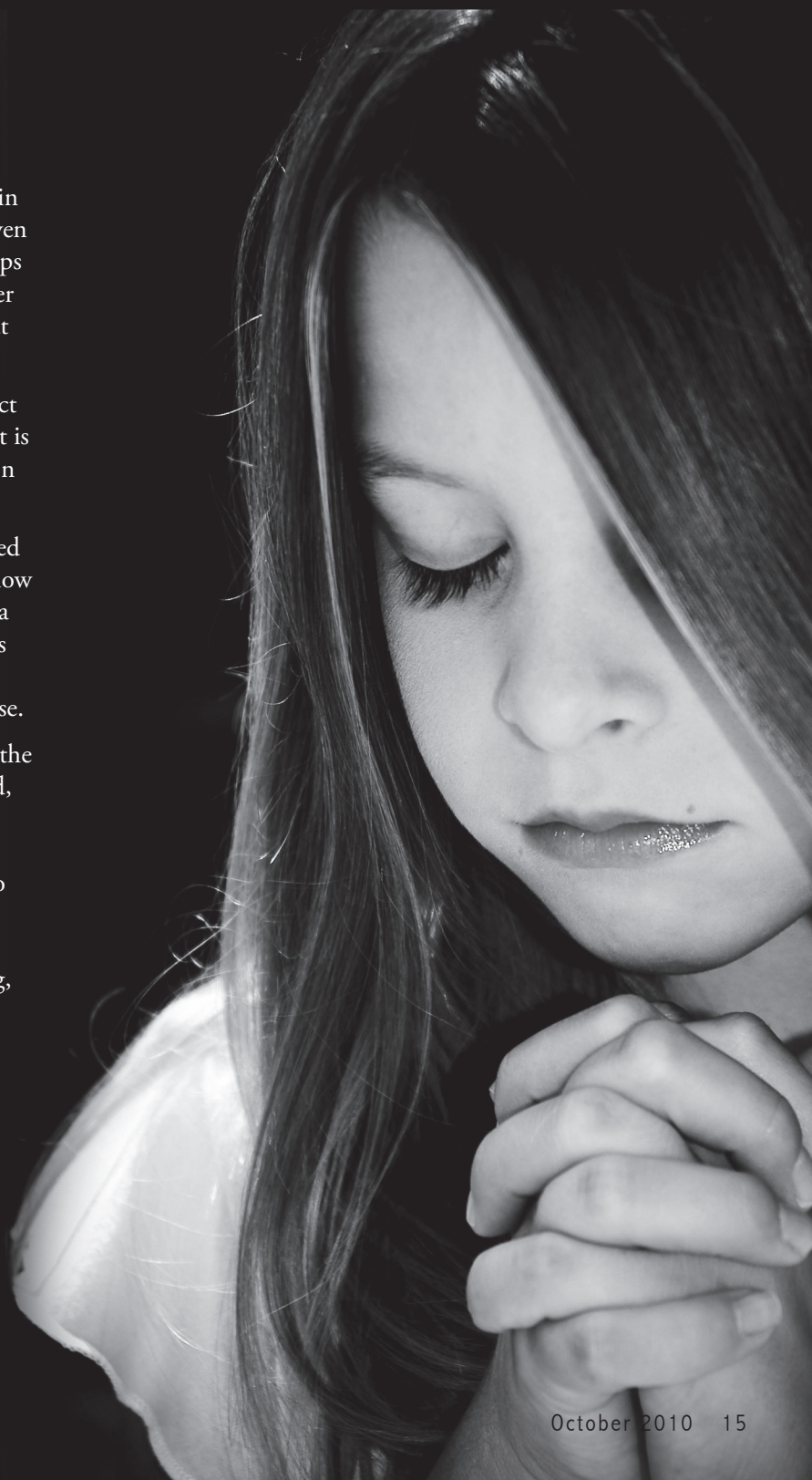
Ninth, it is important to start children learning about the subject early. VOM has a children's magazine entitled *Kid's Courage* that is age suitable, yet begins the important process of early instruction on persecution.

Tenth, give generously to relief efforts on behalf of the persecuted church and encourage your church to do so, also. Challenge fellow Christians to consider an act of symbolic suffering, i.e. making a daily personal sacrifice as a reminder of your brothers and sisters in the throes of suffering. It may include foregoing that daily Starbucks latte and sending the money you save to help the cause.

These are ten ways we all can make a difference in the plight of the persecuted church. Persecution will always be with us. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). He also told us the reason: "If they hated Me, they will hate you" (John 15:18). Persecution is a problem around the world and seems to be growing each year. This only means that we need to seek out a big God, rally to the cause, and do what we can. Everett Hale once said, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."

May God help you to do what *you* can to make a difference for your persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them!

Ballmann serves Word of Truth Lutheran, Kopperl, Texas.



By Ron Wood

SUFFERING:



it's awful. We hate it. We run from it like a gazelle fleeing from a hungry lion. We will do almost anything to avoid it. But suffering is an inescapable part of living in this world. God does not spare even His most faithful servants from it.

Since the original sin of Adam, this world has lived under a curse, a curse of suffering and death that will remain until Jesus Christ is revealed as the King of Kings. Our bodies grow old and suffer numerous painful ailments. Exercising their God-given free will, sinful human beings continue to inflict devastating pain on one another. And the blood of the martyrs has often been the seed of the church. In the midst of it all, many are tempted to shake their fist at God and say, "Why me?" as if something strange were happening to them or as if they expect to somehow be exempt from the painful trials of this world.

We should expect suffering in this life—Jesus promised it to us. We cannot expect God to spare us from all suffering when He did not spare His only Son from suffering. But does God have an ongoing purpose for our suffering?

Jesus came on a mission to suffer and die for the glory of God, and God has appointed us to go and do likewise in the advancement of His kingdom. God has ordained that it is through much pain and suffering that God's kingdom would be established and advanced among all the peoples of the earth.

The real question is whether we will accept the assignment or resist it in a futile effort to avoid suffering. What is most important to us—saving our own lives, or being faithful and obedient to God's call to spread His glory in all the earth? The future of world evangelization will depend on how each of us answers that question.

The life of Josef Tson, a Romanian pastor, illustrates the choices we all face when suffering or persecution comes to us. Beginning in October 1974, Pastor Tson was interrogated for six months, up to 10 hours a day, five days a week, simply because of his faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel. The goal of his interrogators was to "break" him, to make him their slave. They wanted him to abandon his faith and become their ally in destroying others who would dare to proclaim the gospel.

One interrogator said to him, "You're going to be shot, but first I want you tortured so you will curse all that you hold sacred and holy." That is exactly what Satan would like each of us to do when we encounter suffering. He wants us to give up on serving God and distrust God in the midst of our darkest hours. ...

In return for his cooperation, Pastor Tson was promised safety and freedom. He was faced with the choice to remain faithful to Christ or to do what his captors wanted and avoid suffering. What was his highest priority: saving his own life or glorifying God?

Pastor Tson responded to the promise of safety and freedom:

"What you offer me is spiritual suicide. I would much rather accept a physical death. ...

"Why did I say I did not need to save my life? Here is why. During an earlier interrogation at Ploiesti I had told another officer who threatened to kill me, 'Sir, let me explain how I see this issue. *Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.* Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country. If you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood. Everyone will know I died for my preaching. And everyone who has a tape will pick it up and say, I'd better listen again to what this man preached, because he really meant it: he sealed it with his life. So, sir, my sermons will speak 10 times louder than before. I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me."

... It is hard, especially for Americans, to learn to die to self and the pleasures of this world. The Western, consumer-driven culture is designed around satisfying our every desire and avoiding suffering. This is probably why some in the West have developed a "health, wealth and prosperity" theology ... We are taught to live for the things of this world, and this has infected our churches. But when we come to faith in Christ, we receive a new master who has called us to be on mission with Him, and faithfulness to that mission will involve suffering ...

The purpose of all of life is to glorify God and to make His glory known to every tribe and tongue. This is all part of God's grand design for history—to raise up worshipers to Himself from every tribe and tongue. ...

No sane person seeks out suffering. But we embrace suffering when it comes, trusting in God's sovereignty and provision, in order to advance God's kingdom and His glory. We suffer hardship in order to meet the needs of hurting people around the world so they can see a glorious God who loves them and is worthy of their worship. ... Why should we expect the peoples of the world to live for Christ if we are not willing to die for Him? Let us resolve to respond to suffering in our own lives and in the lives of others in such a way that God receives the glory and His kingdom is established in all the earth.

Wood is the editor of Mission Frontiers. Excerpted with permission from the January/February 2010 issue. The quotes from Josef Tson are excerpted from the article, "Thank You for the Beating," by Josef Tson, which appeared in the Fall 2009 publication of To Every Tribe, available at www.toeverytribe.com. Josef Tson has also written the book Suffering, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven.

With new hope

A new Home Missions congregation in Jamestown, N.D.

BY KATHRYN BERRY-KOPPANG

New Hope Free Lutheran Church in Jamestown, N.D., began in April with a group of families meeting at Temple Baptist Church in Jamestown. There was a deep-rooted consensus that God's Word is true and holy, and we were each hungry to be in a church that stood firm upon Scripture. Gathering for prayer, we made a commitment to meet weekly to seek His will. It's amazing what happens when God's people humbly meet to seek His will—He moves in awesome and mysterious ways. He led us to discover the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, where we found new hope for our future.

That was four months ago. God's blessing and leading are evident. We are now worshiping weekly, with Sunday school classes that began in September. This has happened despite the fact that no one in our group is an exceptional leader. The words Jesus spoke to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9) minister to us. We cleave to the promise that our weakness can be His strength.

It was painful for many of us to leave our church homes to begin New Hope. We have been questioned harshly and have heard what is being said about us. Thankfully, it's easy to forget the pain of birth, especially given how delightful it is to watch God's plan unfold. We believe that God wants to spark a revival in Jamestown.

Our first worship service was held joyfully at Temple Baptist church on June 27 with 65 people attending. We have now moved, as God graciously provided an excellent and hospitable facility for us to use indefinitely at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church of



Jamestown. We have 20 families who are committed to this new work.

Members of Grace Free Lutheran Church, Valley City, N.D., are an important support and inspiration for us as a new congregation. In addition to helping with our information meetings, answering many questions and providing pulpit supply, knowledge of their history gives us the assurance that God can use chains on church doors and the loss of one's church home for His purpose and ultimate glory. They have modeled what it looks like for a congregation to "mother" a new beginning. Perhaps New Hope will someday have that privilege.

By God's hand, New Hope was granted Home Mission status in August. As we contemplate that blessing we acknowledge God's sovereignty and trust that He has placed us here in Jamestown "... for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). We see the treasure of the solid foundation in AFLC's heritage and give thanks for being taken under their wing. We have discovered that being under the wing of the Home Missions office is an incredible blessing.

Please keep our congregation in your prayers. We humbly lean upon God's love and mercy for provision and protection as we navigate through the process of establishing a new congregation. We are so grateful that we were led away from sinking sand to a solid foundation. Each time we meet we acknowledge the precious freedom we have that allows us to build a free church in our free land. Praise be to God!

Berry-Koppang is a founding member of New Hope Free Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D., which was recently added to the AFLC Home Missions roster.

In His peace

BY LORILEE MUNDFROM

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

In these days of turmoil and trouble all around the world, it is easy to become fearful of what *could* happen. As we see the various troubles of so many people around us—people losing their homes, people losing their jobs, wars, earthquakes, other weather disasters, and promiscuity in our society—we can easily become very fearful. What will happen to us?

I am so thankful that Jesus does not give us what the world thinks would bring us peace. The peace that Jesus gives does not have anything to do with money, weather, lack of war, or other things that the world around us seems to value. The peace that Jesus gives lasts in spite of the circumstances.

I am also very thankful that the peace that Jesus gives is available to us in spite of who we are. I can be the poorest person on earth and you can be the wealthiest person on earth, but the peace that Jesus gives is available for both of us as we place our trust in Him as our Savior. Someone has said that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. How thankful we can be for that!

Is God still in control? Can we trust Him to do exactly what He says He will? Can we trust Him and have peace in our hearts



even when everything around us seems to be failing and falling apart? We can. We must! He is the *only* way to peace in our lives. Please trust in Him. He is good. He is faithful. He is just. Come to Him with whatever troubles you and He will give you peace.

Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore., is president of the Women's Missionary Federation Reprinted from the July 2008 WMF Helping Hand.

2011 WMF Bible study

Joseph: A Fulfilled Life

Written by Candice Johnson

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A group of eight students and four adults traveled to visit churches in AFLC-India in August. The trip was sponsored by AFLC Youth Ministries. Team members included (front row, from left) Sam Menge, Lydia Schierkolk, Rachael Ballmann, Karen Palmer, Nicole Westlake, Terry Flechsig and Pastor Del Palmer, (back row) Daniel Berger, Zach Knutson, Matt Jordan, Luke Erickson and Pastor Todd Schierkolk.

Pastor Erwin Brandt served sixty-eight years in parish ministry

Pastor Erwin Brandt, 91, of Garretson, S.D., died Aug. 15 in Garretson.

Born Aug. 10, 1919, he was the son of William and Christine (Thoreson) Brandt. He married Lorraine Larson Aug. 17, 1941. She preceded him in death.

He attended schools in Corson and Garretson, S.D., the Lutheran Bible Institute and Augsburg College, Minneapolis. He graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. He was rostered as an ordained pastor of the American

Lutheran Church and the AFLC. After marriage, they lived in several communities, including Corson, Minneapolis, Nunda, S.D., Hettinger, N.D., Lake Preston, S.D., Bloomington, Minn., and Sinai, S.D. They retired to a farm near Garretson. He and Lorraine served in music and ministry for 68 years. Besides pastoring, he was also a farmer, carpenter and businessman.

Surviving are one son, Pastor Michael (Colleen) Brandt, Sioux Falls, S.D.; three

daughters, Pamela Howe, Reeder, N.D., Gracia (Keith) Goodhope, Winner, S.D., Priscilla (Derk) Stevenson, Anacortes, Wash.; 14 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.

The service was Aug. 19 at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., with Pastor Kirk Flaa officiating and Pastor Elden Nelson preaching. Burial was in Split Rock Lutheran Cemetery, rural Brandon, S.D.

Responding to the Word

The gospel message is reaching teachable hearts in Uganda

BY PASTOR NATE JORE

“How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14b).

Godfrey found himself in prison, having been accused of stealing items from a house where he had been working as a night watchman. Though innocent of the charges, he remained behind bars for ten days. The day he was released, I talked with him at the Jinja Court House. He was not filled with hate and revenge as one might expect, but was filled with joy as he recognized God’s purpose for his time there.

“I became a pastor while in prison,” Godfrey said to me with a huge grin on his face. “I was able to share those stories that I had been hearing from the MegaVoice with my fellow inmates.”

I had given Godfrey a MegaVoice (mp3 audio player) with the Lusoga Bible stories programmed on it several weeks before. The stories had stuck in his mind and he shared them with the others in prison. His favorite story had been Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16). He said after telling that story, the inmates were all amazed that Paul and Silas could be singing praises to God even while in prison.

Several weeks ago I was visiting with a shopkeeper in Jinja as I was working on getting passport photos printed for our new son, Jeremiah. I mentioned to him the work that we are doing to translate and record the Bible stories into Lusoga, the local language of our area. One of the businesses of his shop is to sell songs for people to put on their mp3 players or mobile phones. I asked him if he would consider distributing the audio Bible stories from his shop. I was delighted when he said he would do it—and even offer them free of charge! Mobile phone use is growing at a very high rate in Uganda, and a growing number of phones have the capability of playing audio files. That means that the audio Bible stories can be multiplied from phone to phone for free. Could this be the “Bible distribution” of the future for the oral cultures of the world?

In the village of Butagaya, we have just finished the fifth term of the Ambassador Institute curriculum, which included the story of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. There are few things



TOP: Pastor Nate Jore with Godfrey, who used his time in prison to share the gospel message. ABOVE: The students at Butagaya.

more contrary to the African culture than seeing a leader serving the people who should be serving him. The students were challenged by Jesus’ example as they considered the implications of serving their people.

Toward the end of the class time, several students shared what they had learned from the story. Muloki, one of the older pastors, said, “Really, we have not been doing this at all in Uganda. I have been very challenged and want to begin serving the people.”

I have seen this humble, teachable heart among the students many times as they have heard the Word of God and have responded to it. The Butagaya students will be the first to complete the Ambassador Institute certificate-level training when they finish the course in December.

Jore is an AFLC missionary training students in seminary-level classes in Jinja, Uganda.

People and Places

Pastor Tim Hinrichs was installed June 20 at Word of Life Free Lutheran, Mankato, Minn., with Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor Brett Boe was ordained June 27 at Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating. Boe was installed Aug. 15 at Zion-Sarpsborg Free Lutheran, Dalton, Minn., with Nelson officiating. Boe, who serves the Dalton Parish, is a 2010 graduate of AFLTS.

Pastor Micah Hjermstad, a 2010 graduate of AFLTS, was installed July 18 at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

Pastor Eugene Enderlein was installed July 25 at Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa.

Pastor Tom Olson, a 2010 graduate of AFLTS, was installed Sept. 12 at Golgotha Lutheran, Golden Valley, N.D., with Pastor Richard Gunderson officiating. Olson serves the three-point parish at Zapp, Dodge and Golden Valley.

Pastor Evassa Berhanu was ordained Sept. 26 at Maranatha Free Lutheran, Minneapolis. Berhanu was approved for the fellowship roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. He has accepted a call to serve Maranatha Free Lutheran.

Michael Johnson, a 2010 graduate of AFLTS, has accepted a call to serve Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minn. He will be ordained Oct. 10 at Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, with Pastor Elden Nelson and Pastor David Johnson officiating. He will be installed Oct. 17.

Pastor James Lindgren, Comfrey, Minn., has been approved for a call by members of the Coordinating Committee. He was formerly affiliated with the ELCA.

Pastor Joel Wade, Dillon, Mont., has been approved for the fellowship roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. Wade serves **First Lutheran**, Dillon, which was also accepted onto the congregational roster. Both are former members of the ELCA.

A motion for affiliation was approved for **Hope Lutheran**, Delmont, S.D., by members of the Coordinating Committee.

A motion for affiliation was approved for **Our Savior's Lutheran**, Cannon Falls, Minn., by members of the Coordinating Committee.

Three congregations were added to the Home Missions status: **Hope Church**, Enderlin, N.D.; **Hope Lutheran**, Jamestown, N.D.; and the **Fellowship**, Hastings, Minn.

Pastor Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel have resigned as missionaries to Lviv, Ukraine, with East European Missions Network.

Winifred "Winnie" Nelson, 97, of Christ the King Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., died Aug. 13. Nelson is known for her prayer ministry, focusing on a pastor each week and a missionary each month. She wrote many letters of encouragement to each one.

Pastor Tom Brock has resigned as senior pastor of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis. He will continue as x

AFLC memorials: August

AFLBS

Pat Magnuson
Miriam Oie
Christine Stendal
Soren & Helen Engevick

AFLTS

Pastor Erwin Brandt

Evangelism

David VanHoveln

Pastor Erwin Brandt (2)
Delmar Hobelmann

General Fund

Christine Stendal
Doreen Lundberg
Pastor Erwin Brandt

Home Missions

Palmer Haugen
Pastor Erwin Brandt

Doris Sorum

Parish Education

Allan Halvorson
Donald Landers

World Missions

Beatta Gilbertson
Palmer Haugen

ARC hosts upcoming retreats

Upcoming retreats at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

• Chosen Child Conference

For adoptive families to come together to learn, laugh, reflect and heal.

Date: Nov. 5-7

Speaker: Beth Thomas

Cost: \$95/person, family rates available

• The Carol

A musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

Dates: Dec. 10-12, 17-19

Cost: Free

Turkey dinner, craft and bake sale, Christmas praise on Dec. 11

For more information on these retreats and future camps, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877. You can also visit the ARC Web site at www.arc-aflc.org for more information.

Presteng was influential AFLC leader

Herb Presteng, 94, of Grafton, N.D., died Sept. 2. Presteng was a long-time member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, and an active and influential leader in the beginning days of the AFLC.

Surviving are his wife, Dorothea; two sons, Allan (Debbie) Presteng, Grafton, and John (Anne) Presteng, Grafton; three daughters, Carol (Don) Fossum, Puyallup, Wash., Jean (Terry) Olson, Grafton, and Lois (Lyle) Forde, Arlington, Wash.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-August 31, 2010

FUND	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$19,577	\$210,200	\$202,974
Evangelism	8,723	84,741	62,846
Youth Ministries	8,945	96,199	60,411
Parish Education	6,397	74,896	70,633
Seminary	9,971	131,100	117,651
Bible School	32,776	314,593	277,382
Home Missions	20,942	273,487	212,224
World Missions	15,499	177,564	148,626
Personal Support	29,956	215,711	264,806
TOTALS	\$152,786	\$1,578,492	\$1,417,552

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

Not defeated

When Mohammed Saeed was 27 he met Jesus and found a joy and contentment he had never found in Islam. Mohammed worked at a restaurant, but because of his bold witness for Christ, people began to refuse to eat food he had prepared or touched. He lost his job.

In 2002, a Muslim relative told Mohammed to return to Islam or be killed. Mohammed would not turn from his faith in Christ. The relative pulled out

a knife, stabbed Mohammed in the stomach and slit his throat, lips and tongue.

Gary and Bonnie Witherall were serving as missionaries in Lebanon in 2002. One morning a



Pastor Craig Johnson

Muslim extremist came to the clinic at which Bonnie volunteered and fired three shots into her head and killed her. After Bonnie's death, Gary chose to say no to the temptation to hate his enemies and seek revenge. Instead he appeared on television across Lebanon and proclaimed forgiveness for the assassin from himself and from God.

Redoy Roy enjoyed showing the *Jesus* film to villagers in Bangladesh, even though he was threatened and told to stop. One day in 2003, angry radical Muslims beat Redoy, stabbed and killed him.

The showing of the *Jesus* film in Bangladesh did not stop with Redoy's murder. Instead the ministry expanded. Many Muslims heard of what happened and were

curious to see the film a man gave his life to show.

Sergi Bessarab was an organized crime boss in Tajikistan, who came to know Jesus while in prison. When he got out he began to preach the good news of Christ and was involved in the planting of a church in Isfara, Tajikistan. Isfara had no Christian presence, but a strong, radical Muslim one. As the church grew in numbers, opposition to the ministry intensified. It led to Sergi being shot to death in 2004.

Sergi's favorite verse was John 12:24: "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Sergi's death received much attention and led many to pray for the people of Tajikistan. The blood of the martyr became the seed of a fruitful church.

Sunday Nache Achi led a campus ministry for Christ at a university in Nigeria. The ministry distributed leaflets that compared Jesus' teachings with Islamic beliefs. This angered many. One morning in 2004, Sunday was dragged out of his room, beaten and strangled to death. A fellow student, while mourning, reacted to the loss by saying: "Evangelism is something we must be prepared to die for. I see in the Bible examples of many who had to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel. Why not me?"

These stories, which are shared in *Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs*, remind us of the world we live in. It is a world in which there are radical Muslims and others who have an intense opposition to evangelical

Christianity. We live in this world not with fear that Islam might overtake the cause of Christ. No matter how things may appear, Jesus reigns now and forever. "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers" (Revelation 17:14).

We live in this world not with fear that Islam might overtake the cause of Christ. No matter how things may appear, Jesus reigns now and forever.

We should not look at Muslims as the enemy to be eliminated nor as people to avoid all contact with. We oppose the false teaching but love the people and see them as lost souls who need to hear the good news of Jesus and be saved. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Jesus told us, "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). He also promised, "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The church has many stories of ones who have been persecuted, but they are not stories of ones who were defeated. They are stories of ones who, by God's grace, overcame.

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Periodicals

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association retreat center

A prayer for unity

BY MIKE FISK

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

A friend of mine recently returned from two weeks in Vietnam. It was more than a casual visit. He'd been to Vietnam 15 years ago with his father and had wanted to return ever since. His grandparents were missionaries in Vietnam and were forced to leave the country because of the communist invasion. His visit was due to a passion for the Vietnamese people instilled in him by his father and grandparents.

The group divided their time between an orphanage and a coffee shop talking with the local people. Many were eager to practice their English with the Americans and asked many questions about why they came. There were many opportunities to share the story of Jesus with them even though it was officially illegal to proselytize.

On his return I asked my friend about the persecution of the church in Vietnam. On his first visit, 15 years ago, restrictions were very tight and churches were forced to meet underground for fear of government action. I was pleased to hear, however, that times have changed. While there are still many restrictions and believers have to be careful, several church groups have been officially sanctioned by the government and Christianity is tolerated.

That was the good news. I was saddened to hear, however, that

the new freedom has brought about new struggles as well. There had been reports of one denomination turning people from another denomination into the authorities. When I asked why, my friend shook his head and said that the only reason that they could think of was competition and greed.

As I listened to this story my mind immediately went to the prayer that Jesus prayed as He knelt in the garden of Gethsemane. Of all the things He could have prayed for, the one thing that was foremost on His mind was the unity of believers, and in particular, believers who would come long after He was gone. Jesus prayed that we, as believers, would live in unity with one another.

It's amazing to me how many different groups the ARC ministers to every year. There are multiple styles of worship, multiple languages spoken, multiple doctrinal and cultural backgrounds from which these souls come. Yet with all the diversity, there is one Father, one Son and one Holy Spirit.

We need to sense the same urgency that Jesus sensed in the Garden when He prayed. Time is short. We don't know when Jesus will call us home, but we do know that each of us is called to be unified to reach those around us with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is our love and unity that will do the most to draw people to Jesus.

Fisk is the director of development for the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.