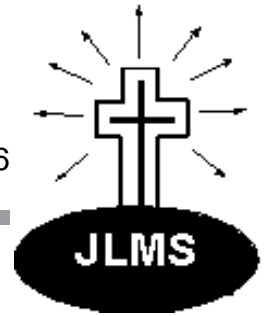


The Jamaica Journal

VOLUME 16 No. 1

JANUARY 2006



Transition in Jamaica

by Regional Director Dr. Jorge Groh

Dear LCMS-WM Missionary Team, Mission Responders, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

LCMS World Mission began working in Jamaica in 1993 to establish a Lutheran church body in Jamaica that would share the love of Christ with the lost. We thank God for the missionaries, volunteers, and short-term teams who served in Jamaica with hearts Ablaze! with love and passion for those who still don't know Jesus and worked shoulder to shoulder with those who by the grace of God became part of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Jamaica.

In a globally strategic decision, LCMS World Mission is transitioning the work in Jamaica to a different level of partnership. The missionaries who are currently serving in Jamaica will conclude their work and be off the island by the end of May, 2006.

Rather than the closing of a mission field, this new step is an opportunity for building the capacity of the Lutheran church in Jamaica by bringing more people to the table to partner with the Jamaican Lutherans in carrying out the Great Commission by sharing the Good News of the Gospel with unreached or uncommitted people. These partners could include other Lutheran church bodies from around the world, Lutheran Hour Ministries, mission societies, recognized service organizations, congregational groups, etc. New linkages are already being explored with a Lutheran church body half a world away and it has generated positive interest. The Body of Christ is truly international and each part supports the other.

LCMS World Mission is committed to continuing the partnership with the Lutheran church in Jamaica through assisting with Facilitating International dialogue, Leadership training, Financial support, etc. Therefore we encourage current mission supporters to continue their prayer and financial support.

Please join us in praying to the Lord of the Harvest that the Jamaican Lutherans will be strengthened for the future and that they will emerge from this process even stronger and

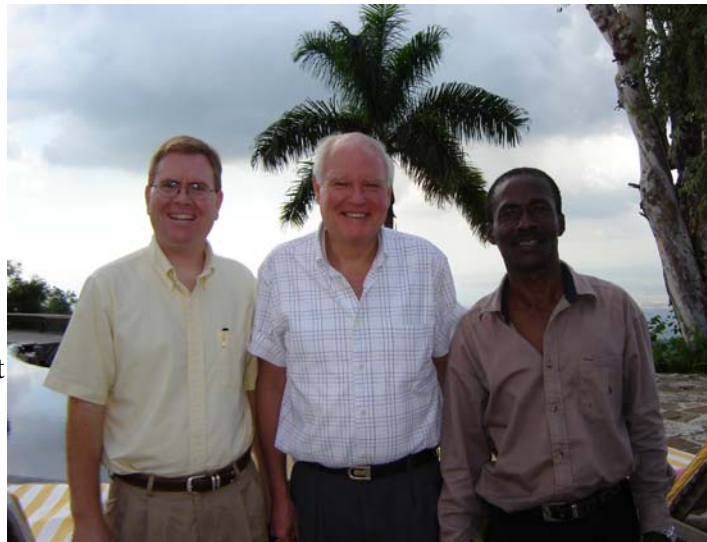
will continue to be a clear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Jamaica, the Caribbean, and beyond.

Lutheran Hour Ministries Visits Jamaica

by Rev. Patrick O'Neal

For a few days in December we were blessed to host Walt Winters, Director of International Ministries for Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM). Walt was here to check in on the work that Lutheran Media Ministries has been doing in Jamaica using the Lutheran Hour (LH) radio broadcast and LH literature. As many of you know, a few years ago LHM had to close the International LH office in Jamaica due to financial difficulties. But through your support and the dedicated work of the staff of Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica, the media outreach has continued. We thank you for your support. As an example of recent work, Mr. Patrick Jones, Media Ministries Coordinator, has completed the process of getting the LH radio broadcast aired on a nation-wide station.

Mr. Winters indicated that LHM would like to continue to support the media outreach here in Jamaica, will increase their financial support in the next year, and has the goal of being able to officially re-open the international office here. Walt shared many exciting new ways to reach the lost using cell phones, the internet, and more. The joint goal of LHM and LCMS World Mission (Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica) is that people come to know the saving



love of Jesus and that they get connected with the local Lutheran church so that their faith may be fed and they may actively participate in the Body of Christ. We look forward to the development of this new phase of the partnership that was begun many years ago, as we work together in Bringing Christ to the Nations.

Working in God's Kingdom

by Jennifer & Patrick O'Neal

Living in a tropical climate sometimes affords the opportunity for lessons learned in a unique way. Yesterday, while playing "restaurant" with James, I (Jennifer) was startled by the appearance of a large dead cricket borne up on the shoulders of hundreds of ants, making its collective way out from under our sofa and toward the wall -- ostensibly to try and get up the wall and out the open unscreened window (living in a house with so few screens has meant a more intimate acquaintance with some of the animal kingdom).

“Well, this should be interesting,” I thought. James and I paused in our game to watch the drama unfold. "How dey do dat?" asked James, as the ants tried various strategies for moving their mammoth find. It seemed their prospects for success were slim -- the vertical distance they needed to travel was at least a foot and a half. But I learned something about ants yesterday. They're very persistent. Though they suffered setback after setback, they simply did not give up. The prize was too great. Each one took his place and together they did what would have been impossible for one. After a half hour or so, I looked back in time to catch their victory celebration as the whole cricket disappeared out of the window -- probably to challenges as yet unknown.

The parallels for us as workers in God's kingdom are many: the need for everyone to be involved in reaching goals; the possibilities which become realities as we work together. Scripture tells us that two are better than one (Eccl. 4:9), and that we are all members together in one body and we each have a role that God has designed (1 Cor. 12). Teamwork certainly has its benefits. As missionaries we use the acronym TEAM which stands for “Together Everyone Achieves More.” The ants illustrate the truth of this. Certainly as we all work together toward common goals, we will benefit each other and the work.

But then I thought, “In God's economy things don't always work that way.” He may choose to use the one, as when David defeated Goliath. Or He may set to naught the work of the many, as with the tower of Babel. The Biblical witness reminds us that ultimately it is the Lord who will prosper our work, not the sheer numbers we gather working or praying. In the Kingdom of God, every single individual is important.

Our strength as individuals and as a TEAM comes from the fact that we have fellowship with our Heavenly Father, through His Son, Jesus, and thereby we also have fellowship with one another. In this way, we work in His strength and by His Spirit to accomplish the task He has given us: that of going out into all the world to make disciples.

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Does your church choir have an abundance of music that is languishing in file drawers? Are there songs waiting to be sung, even though they are “last year’s model?” If so, please consider donating choir music to Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica. Choir music is not easily obtained in Jamaica. We are asking that at least ten original prints of songs be sent so that there are enough legal copies for the choir to use. Please send the music to: Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica, PO box 1085, Kingston 8, Jamaica, West Indies. Please indicate on the customs form that this is used music, and that it is a gift. Leave the dollar value blank. Thank you! As Luther once said “...next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.” (Luther's Works, vol. 53, p.322)

Riggins Report

by Jim & Joan Riggins

The Christmas Eve service this year was held at the home of Pastor O’Neil’s family. The evening started with food and fellowship. There was a variety of foods which people brought. The outdoor service was one of prayer, song and scriptures. Their homes sit on a hillside in a valley so as we sang I could imagine that the songs filled the valley with the Christmas message. We have experienced Easter sunrise services before but never an outdoor Christmas Eve service. It was real pleasure to be outside on a warm starry night to welcome in our savior’s birth. New Year’s Eve was celebrated with a gathering, sharing food and fellowship from 10-11 pm and then a worship service from 11-midnight. Many Jamaicans pack their local churches for this traditional New Year’s service, many more than even at Christmas! We were amazed at the overflowing churches as we drove home shortly after midnight. The churches were literally overflowing into parking lots and some out into the streets, since many churches have open air designs and their walls just open up completely! It is a unique sight!

God has blessed us with the opportunity to serve him in Jamaica for nine months. Recently Joan has been teaching the High School Sunday school class and I have been teaching the 2nd grade class. Every Friday night we have been helping out with the high school youth group. We also have been singing in the choir and have been spreading the word of God when the opportunity comes up. It has been an experience that we will never forget. We return to Cincinnati at the end of May and will not be returning to Jamaica so we are now looking for employment opportunities for the 2006-2007 school year, please let us know if you hear of any opportunities for us.

Return to Jamaica

by Rev. Bruce & Amy Lesemann

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you! We are preparing to return to Jamaica on the 16th of January; We brought quite a bit with us for the kids and have accumulated more in our time here, so packing is going to require some skill and patience! It has been a busy furlough in the US - in some ways I think we will need a vacation after we arrive! :) But it has been great to see so many of you and to have some time to visit with our families, and Bruce had a good trip to the Philippines in December, encouraging and being encouraged by the pastors and members of the Tagakaulo Lutheran Church of Christ in the Philippines.

We approach our returning to Jamaica with a bit of excitement but also a bit of uncertainty. We are excited to return, to see our friends, to return to "normal" work, and to finally be at home after so long. But our roles will be different when we return than when we left. The pastoral role that Bruce once filled will soon be taken over by one of the leaders of the church in Jamaica, and Bruce will do his best to not re-fill that role when he returns so that the new person can fill a need rather than try to fill his shoes. We will be more in "enabling" mode than ever before, trying to encourage the nationals to fill the roles of Bible study leaders and Sunday school teachers. Bruce will be working more to train them as well in the Ablaze initiative; helping them learn to evangelize and reach the lost.

This past week we received an e-mail as well from our regional director, Rev. Jorge Groh. He indicated that changes will be happening on the Jamaican field. He is scheduling a visit to Jamaica sometime after the 17th of January. Please keep his meeting with us in your prayers.

May our dear Lord Jesus fill us all with excitement at the tasks He's prepared for us this year, even if we are uncertain about the future. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to help and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.'" Jeremiah 29:11 :)

In His grace,


Bruce & Amy
Abigail & Gabriel

Lutheran Ministries Prayer Requests for January 2006

1. Praise God that we have experienced favorable weather and have been enjoying the "Christmas breezes." Continue to pray for those who are still suffering from heavy rains in the fall.
2. Thank the Lord for the safe travel of Pastor O'Neal's parents and the Riggins' daughters, Jennifer and Janice, who came to Jamaica for Christmas. Praise the Lord for the safe travel of Eunice Florip who went to see family in Florida after Christmas. Ask God to be with the Lesemann family as they return to Jamaica on

January 16.

3. Pray for Evangelist Claudious Dell in Bath Mountain who is reaching out to the community around him with God's Word, especially the youth who are gathering on Friday nights. Pray that those he visits with would be receptive to the Gospel, and that the Lord would grant Claudious continued strength for the work and peace during the time he is alone.
4. Pray that we will soon receive word from the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (i.e. City Hall) that we will be able to move forward with the Kingston Ministry Center building project. Pray that the Lord leads us to select the right person and company to work once we reach the construction phase.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to grant wisdom to St. Andrew Lutheran Church as they consider how and who they will call to serve as their pastor, and also wisdom for the missionaries as we help to guide the process. Pray that God would raise up men who can be trained as pastors for the future of the church and the expansion of the work.
6. Pray that our great Physician keep the mission team healthy and gives us the wisdom to make time for exercise and relaxation. Pray that He would help us continue to function well as a team and to be in close fellowship with one another.
7. Implore the Lord to send the Holy Spirit to stir up the hearts of those who have not been regular in their worship participation, that they might enjoy the benefits of gathering with other believers and be fed by Word and Sacrament to have hearts Ablaze! share the Good News with others and bring light to those sitting in darkness.
8. Thank our Heavenly Father for the recent visit of Lutheran Hour Ministries International Director Walt Winters. Pray that Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica and the Lutheran Hour may together use various forms of media to reach the lost and connect them with the local church. Pray that the transition from LMJ to LH would go in a smooth manner.
9. Pray for the poor in Jamaica, the homeless, the unemployed, and the under-employed; that the Lord would grant them the things they need and that they might find hope in His Son, Jesus Christ. Pray that those in Jamaica who have so much might be moved to help those who have so little.
10. Pray for the Lutheran Ministries in Jamaica staff in Kingston, Mr. Patrick Jones, Media Ministries Coordinator, and Ms. Ancella Gregory, LMJ Secretary; that the Holy Spirit will continue to fill them and strengthen them for their various tasks, and that they might enjoy the fruits of the Spirit as they work together in reaching out to the lost and supporting the work of the Lutheran church in Jamaica.

11. Petition the God of Heaven who provided even a manger for the baby Jesus, to provide a more suitable worship location for the group in Portmore so that they might worship in peace and be able to easily invite others to join them on Sunday mornings.

PRAYER

Volunteer Update

by Eunice Florip

January greetings from Jamaica and blessings for the New Year 2006.

The Lord has brought us safely to the beginning of 2006, a new calendar year. I sometimes think back at the big fuss that was made over the millennium change to 2000 and am reassured again of WHO IS REALLY IN CONTROL OF TIME! Thank You, God, for taking our days, hours and minutes and ordering them according to your plan.

I had written in the November Newsletter about the record-breaking hurricane season of 2005. We were blessed to be safe in our work here throughout all of it. One last tropical storm decided to form on December 30 and was called Zeta. Praise God, it stayed over the ocean and did no harm to anyone. This storm tied a record for being so late in the year. This paragraph could spark a long, perhaps heated discussion of whether the world's climate is changing and why, but I am reassured again of WHO IS REALLY IN CONTROL OF THE CLIMATE!



Christmas services, my annual trip to Florida to spend time with my brother Walt, and his wife, Lu, from Dec. 26-31 and New year's services have made these past weeks go by quickly and have changed my routines. I wonder if I have chosen the right plan to continue to help people here know :JESUS LOVES YOU. Do you wonder about that, too? Thank God, I am reassured again of WHO IS REALLY IN CONTROL OF THE PLAN OF MY LIFE. "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in

Him, and He shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:5

May God be with you in 2006 and may you know who really is in control.

The picture is of the Kids in Christ group I work with, working on a manger scene picture. Sometimes we have 12 come, other times, only the few, but they like the stories and activities we do.

Please consider a gift in support of the Jamaica Lutheran Hour.

The lead article reports how Lutheran Hour Ministries is helping to plant the Lutheran Church in Jamaica. If you would like to support this vital media ministry, checks can be made out to Jamaica Lutheran Mission Society, marked on the memo line Jamaica Lutheran Hour and sent to:

Randy Gardner, JLMS Treasurer, 72863 Road 428, Arapahoe NE 68922-2228.

Contacting Your Missionaries

Web Site <http://www.cptln.org/jamaica/>

Rev. Bruce and Amy Lesemann (missionaries)
Rev. Patrick and Jennifer O'Neal (missionaries)
Jim & Joan Riggins (volunteer missionaries)
Eunice Florip (volunteer missionary)



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