

LUTHERAN MEN OF AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024 — MAY 2024. Lutheran Men's Newsletter is the official publication of the Lutheran Men of Australia and is published four times a year. The next publication will be in June 2024. Articles and men's related news and stories always welcome.

Check our Webpage: <https://www.lca.org.au/ministry-groups/mens-ministry/>

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Looking to the cross
Bishop Paul Smith



In my hallway in my manse, is a very large print of a painting from the time of the Reformation. In the year 1533, German artist, Hans Holbein (the younger) painted two ambassadors to England: Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve. The painting, now hanging in the National Gallery in London, has become known as 'The Ambassadors' but it is famous for another reason.

In front of the two ambassadors, the artist has painted a human skull, but the skull is not in the same perspective as the rest of the painting. It is a mathematical adjustment of the perspective so that although the skull is accurately drawn, it can only be recognized as a skull when you look carefully. Also, Holbein painted it so that the skull is "floating" at the front of the scene between the viewer and the two ambassadors.

The simple meaning of this painting is to remind us all, that death and mortality is always in front of us. We cannot change that regardless of who we are, even if we are ambassadors representing nations and kings.

But there is a far deeper Christian witness in this painting, and this is something that is commonly overlooked when the painting is published on the internet.

Holbein wanted you to look to the top left corner of the painting. The top left is the place that we "Western" people go to when we look at a book or newspaper because we read from left to right.

When you look at the top left corner of the painting, you see Christ on the cross. Often when this painting is published on the internet, the person posting the picture carelessly "crops" Christ and his cross out of the picture, usually because they don't understand what Holbein was trying to say with his painting.

The image of Christ on the cross in the top left corner is half hidden by a curtain behind the Ambassadors. Holbein is saying that only Christ straddles across our world and our time to the timelessness of eternity. Only Christ has conquered death to give us hope of the life of the world to come.

And there is significant meaning in the tiles that the two ambassadors are standing on. They are tiles on the floor from the front of Westminster Abbey. Holbein is telling us that not only does the work of Christ and his cross links us to the life of the world to come, but that we are able to connect with this work of the cross when he feeds us with his body and blood brought to us from the Altar in Holy Communion. In the painting, the hidden half

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of Christ on the cross is pointing to the Altar in Westminster where we receive the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation in the sacrament of the Altar.

This painting hangs in my hallway as a call to "look to Christ and his cross". It is also a reminder to me, that the world does not understand the centrality of Christ and his cross to all that we are and all that we do.

As we travel the journey of Lent together, as brothers in Christ, we are called by God to encourage one another to fix our eyes on Christ and his cross, to be ready to kneel before the Lord on Good Friday and declare that dies for my sin.

The Scriptures remind us: *"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."* (1st Corinthians 1:18-25)

Let me end with a profound prayer from our Lutheran Hymnal, for those standing at the foot of the cross,

*"Jesus, I will ponder now
On Thy holy passion;
With Thy Spirit me
endow
For such meditation.
Grant that I in love
and faith
May the image
cherish
Of Thy suffering, pain,
and death,
That I may not perish"*

(LHS 59: Siegmund
von Birken)



Lutheran Men of Australia

Dear brothers in Christ

It seems only yesterday that we celebrated the birth of our Saviour Jesus as he came as a babe in Bethlehem. Now, in the middle days of February, we begin our walk with Jesus in the season of Lent as we remember the suffering and death of Jesus as He made payment for our sins.

- L** Let us acknowledge our sin
- E** Encourage one another in our faith
- N** Never give up praying and serving
- T** Thank you Lord, for your death for us



At this time of the year, meetings are held to plan various plans for the different areas of Church life we are involved in. I pray that God will bless your planning as we encourage each other in our faith journey and seek ways we can invite other men to join with us in study and fellowship.

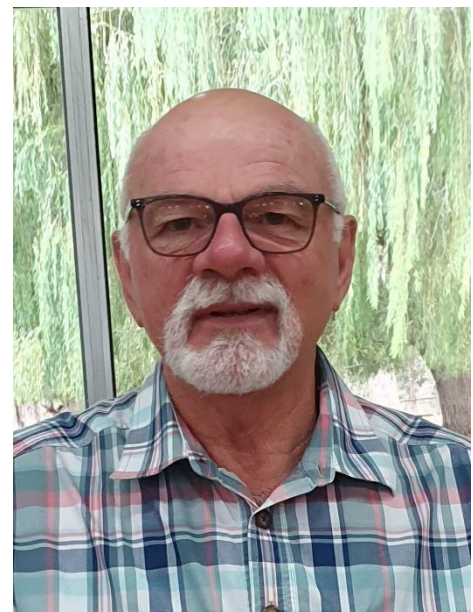
My wife, Faye, and I recently received an invitation for the Installation Service of Pastor Tim Stringer as the Principal of Australian Lutheran College, held on Sunday, 18th February 2024 at St Michael's, Hahndorf. A day to give thanks to God for His constant blessings in giving us faithful leaders in our Church.

The LMV camp and meetings at Tandara Lutheran Camp at Halls Gap, 15-17 March, will also include the LMA 3 yearly meeting. At this meeting, the future direction and office bearers will be discussed. Ross Roll has indicated his desire to retire as LMA Treasurer. Thankyou Ross for your service to the LMA. I have also made known my intention to step back from the position as your President at this meeting and pray for God's guidance in our planning and election of office bearers. Thank you to all who have supported me and the LMA as we look into the future.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

David Pfeiffer

<u>LMA Finance report</u>	Ross Roll
<u>Working Account</u>	
Client No 139291 – Account No 23276S1	
<u>Funds represented by as 31-12-2023</u>	
LLL Account 7379S1	\$ 6,399-15
<u>Men in Ministry Account</u>	
Client No139271 - Account No130732S1	
<u>Funds represented by as 31-12-2023</u>	
LLL Account 7379S1	\$ 5,724-41
<u>Term Deposit account</u>	
Client No 139271 Account No 13073211	
<u>Funds represented by as 31-12-2023</u>	
LLL Account 7379S1	\$ 20,285-78
<u>REG Account 149601S1</u>	
<u>Funds represented by as 31-12-2023</u>	
LLL Account 149601S1	\$ 2,504-40





The Christian ministry to the six million children in Cambodia

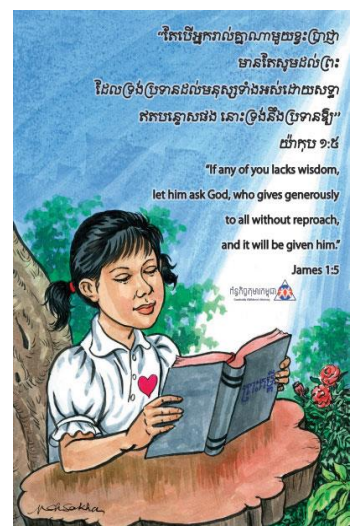
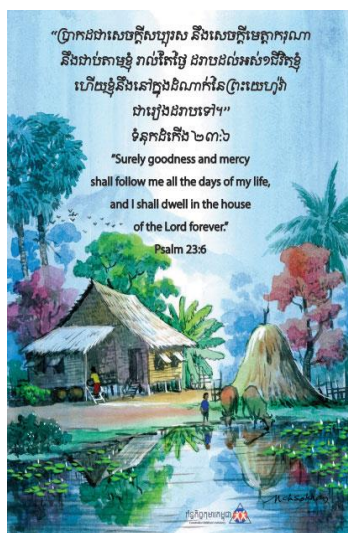
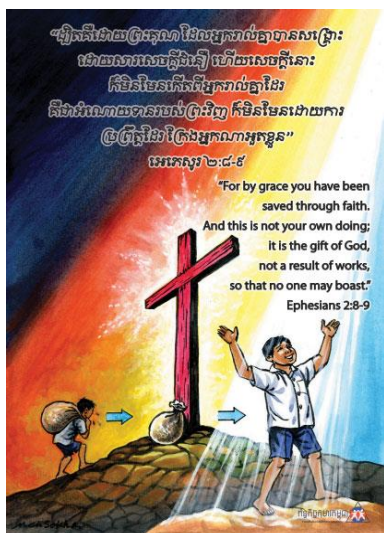
My June 2023 Newsletter article focused on the booklet 'The Best News Ever' which contains 22 Bible stories from Creation to Pentecost and in this edition, for the first time, the text was printed in both English and Khmer. The decision to go bilingual has meant that we can now distribute these widely, including in government schools. In the report I mentioned that just under a year ago 60,000 copies had been printed. Praise God that this figure has now jumped to 120,000 and the demand for more is continuing. Some of our other publications have now also advanced to bilingual status. Our wall cards (post card sized colour pictures illustrating the quoted Bible text) are a good example. More than two million of these have been distributed to date.

October and November last year were busy times for our Cambodian and Australian families involved in this ministry. I have long felt the need to additionally reward Charia You for the amazing amount of work she has achieved amongst Cambodian children through her 18 years work in the children's department of Trans World Radio Cambodia and with our Cambodia Children's Ministry over the last six years. She has a faithful and dedicated family behind her - husband Thearith, himself involved in running a Christian school for disadvantaged children and daughters aged 15 and 10. Also living in the three story family home in Phnom Penh are two of Charia's sisters and an aunt who do a lion's (? lioness's!) share of the catering and housework to keep the family unit running smoothly. It was a pleasure for me to bring Charia back to Australia again for a three week holiday in October in company this time with her husband and daughters for whom Australia was a new experience. Charia had a big bucket list of Australian places she wanted to show her family but my priorities were for them to meet, bond with and thank the dozen or so generous Australian sponsors who help to keep our ministry going and growing. This involved driving them around 3,500 km through three states with Charia contributing to Sunday mission festival services in Kadina (SA), in Parkes (NSW) and Woodside (SA). All our major individual sponsors were met on the trip but donors like LMA who have contributors from far and wide have had to relate particularly to the Woodside meeting where some of them were present.

Prior to the Covid interruption to our lives I liked to get to Cambodia annually to offer support to our ministry there and also to check on how the funds of our Australian sponsors are being economically and usefully spent. So three weeks after I packed the You family back to Phnom Penh, I made a two week visit back to them. It was a busy trip including meeting with our artist, Pastor Sokha and a seven day trip to various centres in Kratie, Ratanakiri, Preah Vihear, Siem Reap and Kampong Thom. I was also able to visit the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LCMS), Phum Krus village and the Rainbow Church in Phnom Penh all of which have an association with the LCA. Charia's November/December Report details all these activities and I can send it to you if you provide me your email address and you can also be included as a regular recipient of her reports if you choose. Charia and her family, as well as myself and my family wish you a safe, healthy and happy 2024 and we look forward to continuing our work together in His Kingdom. We continue to be grateful for the regular financial support offered by LMA.

My email address is tfischer@ozemail.com.au .

Tim Fischer





Thank you for the opportunity to let you know what Lutheran Media has been up to in the past months.

I'm still playing the 'I'm new here' card and am likely to be using that card for some time! I've been in my manager role almost 5 months now and in that time I've been introducing myself to the radio stations where we are played and offering our content to new radio stations too. Yesterday I met with Ian from 107.9 LifeFM in Adelaide and he reiterated that our content is meeting the mark for the radio audience. Ian relayed that the Production Manger at LifeFM said, 'Messages of hope – they are heard everywhere!' Well, I can assure you that we're not heard everywhere, but I'm amazed how many stations play our content. You can find an updated list of stations here: www.lutheranmedia.org.au/where-we-are-found

We aim our radio content to connect with people who have an interest in Jesus and Christianity but who may not know much about the Christian faith, and who are yet to realise the joy of a personal relationship with Jesus. In practice, that means that we don't use theological words like justification and sanctification, but we do point people to the hope that we have in Christ, and tell people that God loves them.

As you could imagine, producing new content is something that keeps up busy and is an ongoing task. We're excited about our new podcasts on being 'welcoming people' and 'belonging' that we're scheduling for early March to coincide with Harmony Week in Australia. We are also working on a new round table conversation on the meaning of Easter for late March, where Jo Chamberlain, Pastor Valdis Andersons and I discuss what we love about Easter (chocolate eggs, a long weekend break) and move on to the topic of why Easter is important to followers of Jesus.

Thank you once again for the prayer and financial support that you provide to Lutheran Media. Thanks to you, *Messages of hope* are being heard across the radio waves and through our social media and web presence.

Cheers and blessings to you,

Tania Nelson

Manager, Lutheran Media.





Men's Fellowship

The Men's Fellowship Group continues to meet on the last Tuesday of each month. Consisting of men from Warrayure, Tarrington, Hamilton and Tabor Congregations. Alternating between the venues of Hamilton and Tarrington with an average attendance of 10 -12 men. We have welcomed several new members this year.

The focus of our Fellowship Group is the study of God's Word. Many thanks to Pastor Neil for his in depth Bible studies and discussion throughout the year,

Studies and discussion this year have included:

- * Study on the book of Judges
- * Discussion on the present situation of the Lutheran Church in Australia
- * Discussion on fellowship and unity
- * Study of Revelation 20:1-5 & 16

We commenced our activities for January with the annual BBQ at Tarrington with visitors from the Warrnambool fellowship. Guest speaker was Walter Brinkmann. Our Group also incorporates a time of entertainment at each meeting. A highlight this year was a visit to the "Deutscher shed" at the Hamilton Pastoral Museum. Several meetings were taken up as a bible study evening. Other meetings include DVD, trivia or just a chat over supper. Some members attended the LMV Retreat at Tandara in March.

The annual dinner in June held at Hamilton was a great success with an attendance of around 55 men and women. Guest speaker was Pastor Richard Fox of Lutheran Media. A retiring offering was taken for Lutheran Media.

A western zone Men's Fellowship meeting in August with an invitation to the Warrnambool Men's Fellowship including families. We met with the divine service at the Good Shepherd Church followed by a joint luncheon with the congregation. In the afternoon, a tour of Campe's Auto Museum which was enjoyed by all.

Thankyou to all the office bearers in 2023. We wish all office bearers God's blessings as the new executive serve in 2024.

Office bearers for 2024 as follows,

President:	Everard Linke
Vice President:	Barry Schurmann
Secretary:	Michael Hartwich
Treasurer:	Allen Schultz
Extra Members:	Roger Hartwich Elmore Tonissen

We pray that all men from the Parish's would consider the Men's Fellowship Group as God's opportunity for them to grow in God's Word.

Come Holy Spirit of God and lead us to Jesus. Forgive us our indifference and negligence. Give us a renewed sense of urgency for our own spiritual life and for the wellbeing of others. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Everard Linke
President

Nurturing Faith

NURTURING YOUR FAITH: PART THREE

Part of the Community

Are you baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Those three splashes make you a person who is a part of something larger and longer lasting than you might know. It allows us to say: I am part of a community called the church whose identity is shaped by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther puts it like this:

"I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one Head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, and yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner (or co-heir) in all the blessings it possesses" (Large Catechism, p. 438).

If you are not yet baptized, please consider a conversation with your pastor today.

GOD'S WORK IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are ailing and failing in our life together because of an ancient spiritual flaw: St. Augustine's recognition that we are created for God alone and will remain restless apart from union with the One in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28b). Of course, that union will not in our lifetimes be perfectly achieved, but in the meantime, we are not helpless. There is work to be done.

We have a Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends to us in Jesus' Name, and He will teach us all things. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, our tutor, and our trainer in righteousness, as Paul confirms in his words to his young protégé, Timothy (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

How is the image of God which we all possess, albeit imperfectly, only realized and recognized in relationships?

We confess our faith in the one church, yet with tens of thousands of denominations globally, we too often see ourselves irreconcilably divided. In what ways are these divisions the result of sin? The Lutheran Catechisms assert, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that the church is united. In answering the question what the church is, the Large Catechism states, it is "principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons" (Large Catechism, p. 174).

REFLECT

Read Ephesians 5:25-27. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, how did the members of the church obtain a holy identity?

Who qualifies to belong to this communion of the saints?

ABOVE ALL THINGS

Luther teaches us that the "holy ones" (communio sanctorum) are scattered throughout the entire world. They agree on the Gospel, have the same Christ, are called by the same Holy Spirit, celebrate the same Sacraments, "whether or not they have the same human traditions" (Large Catechism, p. 175).

We know where this unity comes from—because the body of Christ possesses a single Head. "And He is the Head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18a).

No one, despite how different they are, possesses an identity that is dispensable, optional, or disposable, as Jack Preus puts it: "We are the 'body of Christ,' which emphasizes the unity and necessity of each Christian for the well-being of the church. Because we are united in the most profound way, we are free to rejoice in our differences. We are free to see them not as sources of division, but as God meant them to be: sources of delight" (Just Words, p. 142).

"We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things" (Small Catechism, First Commandment, p. 2). Nothing is above God among our priorities. Nothing is more important than God among our possessions. Nothing is greater than God among those affairs or affections which govern our heart. Unfortunately, we often exchange this absolute God for relative gods. The options and temptations are more than we ourselves can manage.

By "relative," we're referring to anything that is secondary. Only God is primary. Only God doesn't require anything from another source to be who He is. God is His own power source, His own energy source; everything else exists for the sake of something else.

REFLECT

Read Luke 13:22-24. As a child hearing this reading, one might think a reason people could not enter through the narrow door is because they were holding on to things that made them too wide to pass through. In other words, they accumulated too much stuff they weren't ready to let go of yet. What are some of the relative gods that people possess?

How can we keep God "above all things"?

THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

We are not a secret society or a private social club for self-righteous saints. We are not here to put on bingo games or bake sales or fish fries. We are not fryers of fish. Remember Tertullian said: "We little fishes are born in water following our Big Fish, Jesus Christ, and we are saved in no other way than by remaining in the water" (Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, pp. 1, 3).

We are called to be fishers of men, women, boys, and girls, bringing them into the holy little flock, the community of saints under one Head, Christ.

Wilhelm Loehe, a leader in Lutheran Confessional revival, describes this holy thing called the church: "Springing up on Pentecost and Calvary, the church flows through the ages like a river, and that same river and no other will flow unchanging on through the ages until that great day when it will empty completely into the famed sea of eternal blessedness" (Three Books About the Church, p. 55).

God's eternal things are public things. The splashing of Holy Baptism, the homiletical speaking of God's Word, the solemnizing of vows for marriage, the promises of confirmation spoken at the altar, the breaking of bread and the sipping from the cup at the Lord's Table—these happen "in church."

REFLECT

Luther writes: "The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as He calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth" (Small Catechism, Third Article, p. 355). How might belonging to the community of believers, the church, uniquely shape our identity—that is, in a manner that differs from the formation we receive from other communities, like workplaces, families, our cultural group, or society in general?

What are some of the distractions that keep us from effectively being fishers of men, women, boys, and girls?

CONCLUSION

Loneliness has reached crisis levels in our world. A recent study at Harvard suggested that more than a third of all people suffer from "serious loneliness." Quite simply, we were never created to be isolated, independent creatures. We are created beings, created by the Creator who not only created every human person, but creates communities of human persons. Of course, we are unique individuals, one of a kind, irreplaceable, and irreducible to a category, but all humans also possess a sameness with all humans.

The abundant life that Jesus came to restore (see John 10:10) finds its full flourishing in that particular institution, the community called church. So much more than merely a human structure, the church is a mystical and mysterious participation in the body of Christ. We praise the Holy Spirit for the work of bringing us, through the Divine Word and the Holy Sacraments, into an everlasting community grounded in Christ and growing in love for one another.



PRAY

Lord Jesus Christ, keep us close: close to one another and close to Your work of redeeming our relationships. You are our Creator, our Comforter, our Lord and Life-Giver; for You alone seek us, draw us, deliver us, and keep us in the kingdom of grace through Your holy church. Amen.

MISSION STORY



Summer in Bethlehem

11 June 2012

by Pastor Astrid Stephan

Sponsored by the Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau in Germany and at the invitation of the FRM, I was able to serve at Hermannsburg/Central Australia, working for the Bethlehem Lutheran Congregation.

Although it was a very new and different experience for me to live in a remote outback Aboriginal community, I could still feel the old German traditions coming through in the Sunday service liturgy. Many of the hymns sung by the congregation at Hermannsburg are still being sung in Germany today. So, it didn't take long for Bethlehem church to feel more like home than I expected.

Christmas was very interesting for me because of the hot weather and the traditional Aboriginal ceremonies being conducted near the community at the time. In the New Year, I started getting to know a lot of wonderful people: Pastor Marcus Wheeler and his family, who tried hard to look after the congregation without a support worker, Selwyn Kloeden and all the other staff from the Finke River Mission Store who do a great job. Not only do they run the store efficiently but they do it with Christian ethics and a strong desire to help improve the community of Hermannsburg.

We had a lovely time together with a lot of laughter and funny moments. Even in that short time I became part of the community and congregation. They gave me a big farewell and it was really hard to leave new friends and family behind.

My last wish for everyone I came to know at Hermannsburg was: Be strong in faith and never give up caring for each other no matter how hard life gets! God will always carry you through.

Special thanks to the Finke River Mission Board who gave me the opportunity to work in the 'Red Centre'. Very special thanks to support pastor Robert Borgas, who fulfilled the duties of the vacant Arranda Support Worker's position at the same time as he looked after the Pitjantjatjara area. Rob also took me for one week to visit the Mutitjulu Congregation at Uluru where I came to know and appreciate more strong believers in Jesus Christ.

WOULD it shock you to know that Jesus experienced the feeling of having accomplished little? In Isaiah 49:4 we read these words: "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." Note that these are not the words of Isaiah, who was called by God at a mature age. No, they are Christ's own words, spoken by One called from the womb; "from the body of my mother... the Lord formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, (and to gather Israel) (49:1, 5)." When I came upon this passage, one that I'd read many times before, my heart was in wonder. I could hardly believe what I was reading. Jesus' words here about labouring in vain were a response to the Father who had just declared, "Thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified (49:3)." We read Jesus' surprising response in the next verse: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought (49:4)." After reading this, I stood to my feet in my study and said, "How wonderful. I can hardly believe that Christ was this vulnerable, confessing to the Father that he was experiencing what we humans face. In his humanity, he tasted the same discouragement, the same despondency, the same woundedness. He was having the same thoughts I've had about my own life: "I have laboured in vain, this isn't what I perceived was promised. I wasted my strength. It has all been in vain." Reading those words made me love Jesus all the more. I realised Hebrews 4:15 is not just a cliché: our Saviour truly is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin. He'd known this very same temptation from Satan, hearing the same accusing voice: "Your mission is not accomplished. Your life has been a failure. You've got nothing to show for all your labours." Christ came into the world to fulfil the will of God by reviving Israel. And he did just as he was commanded. But Israel rejected him: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11)." Why would Jesus, or any man or woman of God, speak such despairing words as these: "I have laboured in vain?" How could the Son of God make such a statement? And why have generations of faithful believers been reduced to such despondent words? It is all the result of measuring little results against high expectations. You may think, "This message sounds like it applies just to ministers, or to those called to do some great work for God. I can see it being meant for missionaries or the Bible prophets. But what does it have to do with me?" The truth is, we're all called to one grand, common purpose, and to one ministry: that is, to be like Jesus. We are called to grow in his likeness, to be changed into his express image.

Supplied



God's word like a fire

FOR 33 years the Moravian missionaries of Labrador in Canada had toiled on amid such discouragements that they had begun seriously to consider the abandonment of their principal station at Hopedale. But one day in 1804, as a missionary was preaching from the text, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10)," the words took powerful hold of a wretched abandoned woman, so sunk in every vice that she was despised and shunned even by her degraded countrymen. She was filled with the deepest anguish on account of her sins, and spent the night in the huts occupied by the dogs, as though unworthy to associate with human beings. The great word of the preacher, however, proved an aroma of life to her soul. She entered into sweet peace and immediately began to praise the Saviour in the most exultant strains for what He had done for her. She became as a live coal in her village, from which the whole community was set on fire. Old and young were brought under powerful conviction. "In every hut the sound of singing and praying was audible, and the churches could not contain the numbers who flocked to hear the message of salvation." Those converted were moved at once to become missionaries to their lost countrymen, and so the

work spread throughout the land. This was Labrador's Pentecost: it was kindled by a single text. "Is not My word like a fire? says the Lord (Jeremiah 23:29)." Supplied