



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**Advent – Christmas 2015**





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## INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege to be asked to provide the introduction to this series of daily devotions being prepared by The Spiritual Ministry Working Group of The Leprosy Mission International. My particular thanks go to Marta Risko for her dedication and hard work in collating these devotions and her enthusiasm for this project.

Over the more than 35 years that I have been connected with the TLM, one of the greatest joys has been to join with staff in TLM offices, hospitals and at countless conferences in devotions and prayer times. One occasion that stays in my mind to this day and of particular significance was when Dr Paul Brand led a staff retreat day at the International Office at Brentford in the early 90s.

He spoke about Jesus meeting his disciples on the beach following his death and resurrection. It was personal, it was powerful and it was challenging. It also highlighted the tremendous depth of experience and godly insights possessed by so many of our long term workers. Those, not necessarily still engaged in active medical or administrative service, but with so much life experience and a wonderful ability to share those experiences and insights with a new generation of workers.

That is what this new set of TLM daily devotions is attempting to harness and share within the TLM family. No doubt some of us will recognize 'old friends' as we use the devotionals prepared.....but for others it will be a unique opportunity to tap into a goldmine of wisdom, faith and life-long devotion to Jesus Christ. I have no doubt this collection of devotions will be 'special'.

One of the benefits of being around for a while is that one gets to know so many people and realise the extent of the diversity within the extended TLM fellowship. I know that as you use and share these daily devotions you will be blessed and encouraged by the stories, the biblical insights and be inspired by God's word as it is shared.

A very big **thankyou** to all of those who have agreed to contribute to this series of devotions and if anyone has suggestions of others that might be included as contributors, please let Marta know... I know she will be delighted.

### **Ken Martin**

Chairman The Leprosy Mission International. I joined The Leprosy Mission on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1978 and the Queensland Secretary (now director) and served in that role until 1<sup>st</sup> September 1980 when I became the National Director for TLM in Australia. I was appointed when the then serving National Director, Bill Edgar, moved to London as Communications Director under Eddie Askew. I was Australian National Director for 10 years and in October 1990 was appointed to the International Office as Director for Support and Development. I was in that role until May 1996 when I returned to Australia and became the National Director for Interserve, who shared an office with TLM. In 2001 I was elected to the newly formed International Board and was on the board for the maximum 8 years and completed my term in 2009. After a short break I elected as Vice was Chairman and rejoined the board in that capacity and in 2013 was elected Chairman.



## **T h a n k s**

The Bridge is an answer on prayer. I give thanks to the Lord, who gave the idea of it on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015 as His clear response on my long-time question: "How can the accumulated outstanding spiritual capital of TLM-people be mobilised and demonstrated in the daily life of our mission?" „A spiritual portrait gallery – devotions written by retired and active TLMers - creating a bridge.” – said the Lord.

Thanks to our Spiritual Ministry MAWG for the green light to implementation.

Thanks to Allan Ekstedt for faithfully doing the theological proof.

Thanks to Christine Osman, to Joyce Missing, to June Nash, to Mo Lewis for kindly doing the grammar proof.

Thanks to Márta Varga, Hungarian graphic designer, for The Bridge - logo.

Thanks to Everyone, for building The Bridge between past and future, North and South, East and West, heaven and earth. Come on, join more and more in building:

## **The Kingdom!**

Blessed reading!

**Márta Riskó**

Minister of the Presbyterian Church Hungary. 39 years with TLM. Formerly volunteer, since 2010 Country Leader TLM Hungary.



## It starts small

*“What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed ...” [Luke 13:18-19a]*

We don't have any photos of Jesus. That is a good thing: maybe we would treasure it too much, maybe we would worship it. But from what we read in the Bible, Jesus did not resemble a king in any way. Not his looks, not his upbringing, not his behaviour. He announced the start of God's Kingdom, and then astonished people by showing that this Kingdom was not at all what they hoped and expected. *Emmanuel*, 'God with us', was nothing to do with politics or military power or rights and entitlements.

No, this was an upside-down Kingdom. This king came as a baby in a poor family, far from home, in a century when infant mortality would have been high. This king learned a trade, and I have a feeling that he spent more time listening than talking in his early years. This king was gentle, especially to those who were weak or struggling or excluded. 'A bruised reed he will not break'. This king came to serve. Even in the vivid picture of God's kingdom in Revelation, the throne is occupied by a lamb that has been killed. Who would imagine any power there?

So Jesus was a big disappointment to many people. At the time he told this parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the yeast that comes straight after, the disciples were discouraged. There was not much evidence of the Kingdom at all, his followers were giving up, and public opinion was hardening against Jesus. So Jesus encouraged them with two pictures that showed them that the Kingdom starts small *but it grows*. When we think of seeds and yeast, what can we say about this growth? It is unseen, silent. It is powerful – we are surprised that something so small has such an effect. It is disturbing. It is transforming. It impacts others: the yeast affects the whole batch of dough, the mustard bush becomes a home for all sorts of birds.

In The Leprosy Mission, we sometimes act as though big must be better. But actually, the best things have often started small. In 1874 the first TLM support group was three sisters and some friends. Wellesley Bailey started small: a few huts, some basic care, a lot of love, not much money. As we get bigger and more skilled, more professional, we can miss this point just as much as the Pharisees and teachers of the law did. God's way is more often to start small.

This Advent, let's give thanks that God brought in his Kingdom through the small and the weak. Jesus the vulnerable baby. A small group of disciples who argued and didn't really understand. Jesus, misunderstood and ostracised. Jesus the suffering servant. And at his death the flame almost goes out .... but it doesn't. God's Kingdom has come, it is growing throughout the world, lives are transformed. Look at ourselves: weak, feeble, sinful men and women – but, amazingly, empowered so that we too can be like Jesus, to serve Him and see God's Kingdom continue to grow.

### Geoff Warne

General Director, The Leprosy Mission International  
New Zealander based in London  
34 years with The Leprosy Mission



## In Him was Life

*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:4-5)*

The build up to Christmas comes rather too early in the UK with shops displaying Christmas goods as early as September. With so much shiny Christmas glitz distracting every trip to the shops, it can be all too easy for the meaning of Christmas to be lost. Before I worked for TLM, my wife Jan and I lived in Nepal in the 1980s, and at that time the only evidence of Christmas was what went on in our church and in the homes of Christian believers. With less outside distractions, it seemed to bring home the Christmas message with greater clarity. Too much glitz is distracting, and ironically it can draw us away from the true light which we celebrate in the birth of Jesus.

John opens his Gospel with the wonderful truth, that not only is Jesus the light of all people, but that the darkness has not overcome this light. 2000 years later we still testify to this, that even in the darkest of times – light can and will penetrate the darkness.

I love reading John's Gospel because it has such depth. The Apostle is now elderly and is reflecting back many years to Jesus life, death and resurrection. Have you noticed that throughout the book there are several passages which highlight Jesus as the light or contrast the light with the surrounding darkness? It's something to watch out for next time you dip in.

This theme must have been on John's mind a lot as he takes it up in his first letter. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)*

I was delighted when Martha Risko recently contacted me telling about this TLM devotional material and asking me to contribute. I felt straight away that it can serve as a light to our path throughout the year. And because the contributions will come from within TLM, hopefully it will strike a chord with all of us.

My first contribution has a very simple message. TLM is a global fellowship, and we seek to be in fellowship with each other as we fulfil our different roles and responsibilities. In his letter John is very clear that our fellowship with one another has a direct relationship with our determination to walk in the light of Jesus. That's not to say that fellowship only works properly when we live perfect lives: none of us can claim that! John is quick enough to point out in the same verse where our hope lies: in the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus.

We cannot escape the fact that just as Jesus is **The** light of the world, so we reflect his light as we live out our lives and carry out our ministries. Let's take care to walk on in that light!

### Trevor Durston

General Director 1993 – 2006

Now retired and working as a volunteer Area Representative in the UK



## Advent

### *Luke 1 verses 5-25*

Advent should be a time of awe and wonder as we consider the mystery of it all. God is fulfilling prophecy and working out His purposes. It is His action entirely, and not our work! As Zechariah ministered in the temple an angel appeared to him, and told him that in his old age his wife would bear a son, and he should be called John. The long awaited Messiah was coming, and John would prepare the way for Him, and call people to repentance. The mysterious and wonderful story of John's arrival brings new hope of salvation for all people. God had not forgotten His promises, nor had He stopped loving His people. God's hand was upon John giving him the strength, courage and wisdom to fulfil all that God wanted him to do.

God's hand is also upon each of us as we seek His will and purpose for our lives. He also enables us as we face the good and the bad as we go through life.

### *Luke 1 verses 57-75*

Zechariah having regained his speech after John was born brings a prophetic word about the coming Messiah, who will give light to those in darkness, and guide us in the way of peace. Advent should be a time of hope and preparation for us as we prepare our hearts to wonder again over the Babe born in Bethlehem.

There are many different advents in our lives. One I remember very clearly was the advent of Multi-drug therapy when I was working in Bhutan. For so many years we had been giving Dapsone to the leprosy patients which they had to take daily for their life, with virtually no hope of a cure. It was quite demoralising for them and also for the paramedical workers, who spent their lives walking up and down the hills to give the treatment to patients. Now with multidrug therapy there was hope of a cure. Patients would be able to stop taking treatment after a specified time. Now there was a definite end in view. There was a fresh impetus amongst the staff and a definite hope that we would eventually see a world without leprosy. As we commenced multidrug therapy there was a fresh excitement around.

We are so familiar with the Christmas story that we allow the hustle and bustle of preparation to take over our lives. It is good, however to spend some time quietly allowing the majesty and eternity of God's amazing plans to overwhelm us, and fill us with that awe and wonder. This will help us to be personally prepared for the coming and the second coming of the Lord. Then we will be able to help shed the light of Christ to others, in all that we do at Christmas.

### **Mollie Clark**

English. Went to India in 1961, worked in Purulia for 8 years as a nurse, before being transferred to Bhutan. Worked for 18 years in four different areas in Bhutan until I was transferred to the international office in London as personnel director. I was there for eight years until I retired.



## From Unbelief to Obedience to Joy

*Text: Luke 1:26-38 (NIV)*

The Ministry of Jesus is one of obedience to God's will. He was with God and was God as scriptures say; and He and God are one. As we read in the book of Philipians though He is one with God, He submitted himself with utter humility and obedience to be a servant in this world for God's work of salvation of humankind. Through his obedience, He performed many miracles. He fulfilled God's purpose of reconciliation of man with God through his sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. While we remember Jesus' Ministry, at times we do not fully understand his entry into this world, which is equally supernatural and full of drama.

When God decided to send Jesus into our world, He did not choose a person for this task anyone from royal lineage, from the nobility or such people who are high above in the social hierarchy. God chose an ordinary village girl who is innocent and full of emotions to perform His miracle. When the angel of God spoke to Mary and pronounced that she would bear a child as a virgin, she was struck with a deep sense of anguish and surprise. She could not comprehend how what God wanted to do through her would be possible. She also could not believe that she would be a chosen vessel for God's creation of the Saviour. She was full of fear and apprehension because of the purpose for which she was chosen would bring her ridicule and shame from the society in which she lived. Her unbelief and apprehension turned into joy when she obeyed God's command and purpose for her life. God's work at times troubles us psychologically because we do not truly understand the great things He does through us. God could perform His miracle in and through Mary when she obeyed His command, His desire, His wish and His word. Only because of her obedience, we now have the privilege of receiving Jesus Christ as our Saviour in human form.

God chooses the ordinary for the extra-ordinary happenings such as the virgin birth; which He performed through Mary. God's decisions are different from our thinking and expectations. God makes the impossible, possible. As we see in the life of Mary, through her willingness to put God ahead of the world through her obedience, we got peace and joy in Jesus Christ. May all of us in the advent season humble ourselves to obey God's purpose for our lives as Mary did in her life!

**Dr PLN Raju**

Deputy Director (Resource Mobilization)  
The Leprosy Mission Trust India



## A Walk with Mary

*Luke 1:26-38*

I enjoy a good walk and I walk along the prom here by the water's edge. I have a particular route which I use as a prayer walk when I remember special people and places. One day, I thought about the walks we read about in the Bible. In these days of advent, let's go for a walk with Mary.

Try to put ourselves in Mary's shoes for these few minutes. Read that passage, think about how you might have reacted in Mary's position. Remember she was an unsophisticated village girl going about her tasks in her parents' home waiting and preparing for the time of her marriage to Joseph. What would be going through her mind, what questions did Mary ask?

Why me?

It is obvious what people are going to say, isn't it? The sly looks; the knowing grins; the wagging tongues.

And Joseph? Will he still want me for his wife? There will be a scandal if he puts me aside. Then what will I do? Did I really see and hear an angel? Is it really true?

Elizabeth is going to have a baby too – that's incredible, surely she is too old!

What will she say when I tell her my news?

What would you do in Mary's situation? She sets off to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Perhaps she wanted to get away from her family, her friends and even Joseph. Perhaps understanding Elizabeth's situation might help, after all it seems to be connected.

So she sets off on a journey, from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea. You will regularly go on journeys – locally, overseas, to a different part of the country. To you this journey of about 90 miles might seem nothing at all. Think back over two thousand years ago – this is a long, difficult journey. Mary would have travelled with a caravan, maybe getting a ride but she would walk at least part of the way. The journey would have taken at least 4 days. What a journey for a young girl. Did she turn all those questions over in her mind?

Have you ever been on a journey that took 4 days? You are on a journey now - a journey with God as you walk through your life. What thoughts are on your mind?

What God is doing in my life?

Why do I have this illness or sadness?

What will today bring?

What will tomorrow bring?

Are you excited about something?

Are you worried about something or someone?



At the time of the first Christmas –

*Mary gave her reputation and her body*

God gave her love and comfort.

*Joseph gave his name and loyalty to Mary*

God gave him wisdom.

*An innkeeper gave a dark and dirty stable*

God filled it with light

*After a night of pain and distress for Mary*

God gave her joy and peace.

*To shepherds on a hill near Bethlehem*

God gave the hope of salvation.

*To wise men searching for a king*

God gave guidance.

This Christmas –

*To those who want their sins forgiven*

God gives hope.

*To those in sorrow and pain and anxiety*

God gives peace, joy and comfort.

*To those who give up all for Jesus*

God gives His abundant love.

*To those who seek to do His will*

God gives wisdom and guidance.

*To wise men and women seeking for a king*

God still gives Jesus. (unknown)

**Christine Osman**

Scotland - retired International Treasurer TLM



## Mary's Song

*Luke 1: 46-66 (NIV)*

Mary is in a season of her life where she has a lot that she could be worrying about but rather than worrying, in our reading we find her worshipping. We could do well to learn from the example of Mary to replace worrying with worshipping. It is okay to be concerned about your life, and to make plans for your future. But Jesus says do not worry. You may ask, "Well, if I should not worry, what should I do?" Worship. Take all of that energy and impetus and put it toward worship. Mary does. "And Mary said," or sang; ultimately this is going to be a song. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Rather than worrying, Mary is worshipping. Worship is what we were made to do. It's what we all do, all the time. It's simply the way that it is. And worship starts with God. The God of the Bible, unlike every other god and every other religion, is one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, eternally existing in perfect harmony and communion, sharing all the divine attributes. And the Father, Son and Spirit, they communicate with one another, love one another, honour one another, glorify one another, and serve one another. It is perfect community. They worship, enjoy, celebrate one another, continually. The Bible says we were made in the image and likeness of God, male and female, that all of us are worshipers, we're unceasing worshipers. What that means is, we give ourselves to, and we live in light of, someone or something. Now, we're supposed to be worshipers of God. We are supposed to celebrate God and trust God and enjoy God and love God and serve God. Because God is good to us.

But what so often happens is the opposite of worship which is idolatry. We keep worshipping, but we worship people, things, other than God. The Ten Commandments begin with, there is one God, and you worship him alone. If you do this, you don't break the rest. It changes how we live. It is incredibly practical.

People put celebrities; athletes; sports teams, hobbies, boyfriends or girlfriends, husbands or wives, sons or daughters or grandkids, intellect, reputation or appearance in place of God. We live for them, we get our meaning, our value, our security, our significance, and we worship. But the worship is always in vain because idols always disappoint. Unlike God, they're not perfect, they're not selfless, they do not love, they're not good, and they don't endure forever. That is why idolaters are always despairing.

Instead we have Jesus to take away our sin and reconcile us to God filling us with the Holy Spirit that we might worship God by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. The life of God is connected to us. The life of God is imparted to us so that we can worship God. And that means all of life. With our money, our time, our talent and our treasure, the way we live is to God's glory for the good of others and our joy.

God wants us to be happy, secure in Him worshippers. Mary is a happy and secure worshiper. Now she has much to be worried about. But rather than worrying, she's worshipping. Celebrating God, happy in God.

**Linda Todd**

Country Leader of Scotland since March 1998



## The Bridge

*“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.”*

*1 Timothy 2, 5 NIV*

There's a lovely stream that divided the main part of the Chikankata Mission in Zambia's southern province from the leprosy settlement. It's named Chifwankala - the place where the crabs die. For most of the year the stream flows gently. You can hear the sound of water falling quietly over the rocks. Children play along its banks, the pintail whydahs swing on the long grass. At night the fireflies dance in the air. If the crabs die it's because the children catch them by hand, then fry them in a jam tin over a small fire. It's a child's paradise.

Wading across might have been the way of earlier days; a few stepping stones would have sufficed, but in the rainy season the stream becomes a raging torrent. Something had to be done to make sure we remained connected. A bridge! First several tree trunks were driven into the river bed with logs placed roughly into their forks, creating a supporting structure. Then smaller logs were laid at right angles to form a walkway. With its rustic appearance it seemed to fit quite naturally with the surroundings. It was certainly functional and worked satisfactorily for years. But we were worried about the termites. Would they destroy the link? And would this stand the worst of storms?

An Australian engineer and international staff member shook his head: 'We need something more substantial.' He got to work with a team of workers, until the great day arrived for cutting the ribbon and celebration. Here was the connection that would stand the test of time. It was another step in the relentless integration of the mission, so that those with and those without leprosy felt one with each other.

You can probably read my mind as we celebrate the coming of the Christ during advent.

'In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ...' (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV)

Christ is the enduring bridge between God and his creation. We could not establish that link ourselves. God made the connection. It was his plan; it was his work.

The Chikankata leprosy settlement that once housed hundreds of patients has now closed; they have returned home. But the bridge remains.

I can't help feeling that bridge made its contribution to the process of normalisation.

### Dr Paul du Plessis

After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, South African born Dr Paul du Plessis and his wife, Margaret have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM dating back to his work at TLM Field Representative for TLM for Zambia in the 1970s. He is a former vice-president of TLM.



## Shalom

*'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns". Isaiah 52:7*

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." Luke 2:14*

The messages of prophet and angels were intended to bring hope to a people in captivity, bondage and servitude. As a child I remember my family singing those lines from Isaiah with an inspiring four part tune which was fun to sing. But what is the meaning for us in a world of strife. We see daily on our televisions refugees seeking a peaceful life appearing on our doorsteps. All they wish is to be treated with dignity, kindness and empathy, but we don't want to know! It's easy to relate this to the Christmas story of an occupied country into which the Prince of Peace was born. Where fear and intimidation was the order of the day. So the words of Isaiah, what did they mean?

The messages point us to our Saviour, the Prince of Peace, and yet they are followed by words which speak of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. For those of us who believe in a Creator God, we first need to find our peace in Jesus, the Saviour of the world; and to share that peace with our communities. Perhaps in our routine daily lives we forget the treasure we have in our "earthly vessels": the treasure to bring peace and blessing to those around us. Advent, is the time of waiting in expectation for the coming Messiah. Yet he was also to be the suffering servant, the two things go together somehow.

I will never forget the young man who came to us for medical help for his congenital heart condition. His father was a poor road labourer. While the young man was in hospital some of the Christian staff, who spoke his language, shared with him the message of the salvation which Jesus gives. We had no permanent medical solution to his problem. We prayed for healing for him and he experienced some measure of healing, but not complete. We asked him how he felt about that, his words were, "it doesn't matter, I have found peace in Jesus". He was sent to India for training but within a few weeks he had died of a massive heart attack. His father mourned his son but was grateful for what had been done to help him, no bitterness. I felt humbled by his response. The treasure was passed on to that young man in time for him to know the real peace which passes all understanding.

The challenge for me is, am I a publisher of peace, or do my words and actions cause more strife? Do I bring that message of salvation or more trouble? It is only as we channel the peace of Christ by his holy spirit that we can bring blessing and his presence in the situations in which we live and work. Shalom.

### Joyce Missing

Living in retirement in the south of England. Formerly a staff member. I worked in Bhutan from 1973 – 1991 [nurse/administrator]; then at the International Office 1991-2006.



## The Prodigal God vs the Lost Sons

*Read: Luke 15: 1 – 3, 11 – 32 (NIV)*

“Prodigal” means: *Recklessly extravagant; Having spent everything*

In the beginning of the year I read the book “The Prodigal God” by Tim Keller, which made me realise how we often see God and perceive ourselves. I want to share some of his thoughts with you all. We probably know this parable quite well. A Father has two sons, each of whom represents a different way to be alienated from God, and a different way to seek acceptance into the kingdom of heaven. The first verses describe that Jesus is teaching to two groups: the tax collectors/sinners and to the Pharisees/Teachers of the Law. Each group seems to correspond with one of the two brothers.

The younger brother, sometimes called the Prodigal Son, demands his inheritance, leaves the house and recklessly spends everything in an extravagant way. Until the money is finished and he realises that he is lost. He is a bad son, a sinner, an immoral outsider. But he humbly returns home and is reinstated by the loving and merciful Father. This is the story as I remember it from Sunday school.

About the older brother, much less seems to be taught. He has always worked hard for the Father and has always been obedient. He illustrates the way of moral conformity. He seems to be the good son. But it turns out that he is blind, narrow minded and self-righteous, like the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. He feels morally superior and thinks that because of his goodness he has a right to the goods of the Father. He is not interested in the Father Himself, and doesn't realise that he is alienated from the Father. In the end he doesn't want to reconcile with his Father and is left in his alienated state....lost.

What struck me in this story is that Jesus is pleading not so much with immoral outsiders as with moral insiders. He wants to show them their blindness, narrowness and self-righteousness, and how these things are destroying both their own souls and the lives of the people around them. Both older brothers and younger brothers are still with us today, in our church, in our families and maybe even in our own hearts. We should recognise it, confess it and need God's initiating love to change it. - God shows Himself in the parable as a loving Father. You could say that He is the Prodigal God: even extravagant and overflowing in His love. His love and forgiveness reach both immoral outsiders as moral insiders.

Nehemiah 9: 17b: *“But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”* (NIV)

What has this to do with Advent? During Advent we are expectant, looking forward and preparing for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is redefining everything we thought we knew about connecting to God. He is redefining sin, what it means to be lost, and what it means to be saved. In this parable we see the Father who is longing and waiting for his lost younger son to come back home. And when the Father sees him, he runs toward him.

The older brother is not waiting or longing for his brother or even for his Father. He is angry and not even willing to come, so the Father is going out and coming to him, but is rejected. - During Christmas and Easter the Father has come and is coming to us through His Son. He is taking steps to reconnect with us. How will we respond this year?

### Henno Couprie

Henno is Country leader of TLM Netherlands since January 2004. Before TLM he worked for some years in Christian development work in Indonesia, PNG and Ivory Coast. Henno is married with Joyce and has a son and two daughters who are teenagers.



## “O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you a-right?”

### *Ephesians 1:3-8*

This is song about how to welcome Jesus, written by Johann Crüger in 1653 and translated by Catherine Winkworth.

In the week in which I write this devotion, my town, Apeldoorn, welcomes 400 refugees, men only, from Syria and Eritrea. They will live for a while among us after which they move on. Others, men, women and children will arrive after them, possibly to live here more permanently. Not all people of our town welcome the Syrian and Eritrean men. There is a big divide between us. Some are angry; others are suspicious and keep at a distance.

Jesus met with different people. Some were with Him. Others opposed Him and were working against Him. After he was born some came from far to welcome and worship Him. Others, from nearby, killed the young boys of the town hoping that this young King would be rubbed out in the massacre.

There are different ways to receive Jesus and people among us or to welcome Him and them.

With our own conditions ‘thus far and no further’, putting down some red lines. We can be prejudiced, be disappointed about earlier experiences with Jesus or by having listened to stories and gossip about people who come among us.

The song of Johann Crüger breathes a completely different attitude: ‘How shall I meet you, how welcome you a-right?’ How do you, Jesus, want me to welcome you, with what kind of heart and mind and hands and eyes and mouth and feet? These are good questions when you start your day with Jesus in a private or public devotion. As a young Christian I learned to read my Bible with two questions: ‘Who are you Lord?’ and: ‘What should I do Lord?’ (questions of Paul in Acts 22)

How can I listen to the desires, concerns, the hopes and fears of others and meet them when they come?

The ‘house’ of The Leprosy Mission has at least two doors. Each year some go and others come. We go for other jobs. Others become pensioners. Some go happily. Others go through the exit door because there is no job for them any-longer or because things did not work out as they and we had hoped for. The entry door is frequently used too. People enter as cleaners and leaders, as drivers, administrators, doctors, social workers. They are all alike. They are human, have a heart and expectations, hopes and fears. Fears are there sometimes because of past experiences and failures.

How do we welcome them? We cannot respond to outrageous expectations perhaps. But we can make them feel wanted, needed, respected, loved and for that purpose we put effort into the welcome.

How shall I meet you Jesus, how do you want to be welcomed by me? Tell me, teach me, transform me, my way of thinking, talking and doing as and when I meet with you and with people who are new and old in Your Mission!

### **Dr Piet Both**

former TLM staff, from 1991 till 2015; I started as Medical Advisor for TLM Africa and have been based in The Netherlands. I am retired and have worked 24+ year for TLM in different capacities. I have found it a privilege to work with so many TLM colleagues especially in African countries, Bangladesh and Nepal. Other highlights have been to work with people who had organised themselves in organisations like ENAPAL, IDEA etc. I am married with Margriet and we are blessed with 5 children and a 5th grandchild is expected in January.



## Touch

*“Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing, he said, be clean!”  
Mark 1,41*

Sometimes I am asked: „Why do you need a leprosy mission? You don't have a mission for chicken pox or a mission for various infectious diseases.

Why does the Christian church need to get into this business of treating leprosy in such a special way?

Why single out this one disease?

The answer is: because more than any other person in the world the person with leprosy needs to be treated by somebody who will reach out his hand in the name of the Lord Jesus and touch him because, in that personal touch backed by love and affection and devotion and compassion, we are mediating the love of Jesus Christ that this man, isolated by the world, should be welcomed into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that if we are to exist with any worthwhile purpose in our lives, it is to follow in the steps of our Master and to seek to do in some way what He did, and what He still wants to do through us. And I would like to base my thoughts on an action of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was repeated over and over again, probably every day of His public ministry:

Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man who was sick, the woman who was faint, the people who needed Him.

### **Dr Paul Brand OBE**

1914-2003. American. Born and raised in India, as son of missionaries. During their joint careers with his wife Margaret, international fame came to Paul for his pioneering and perfecting work in techniques of tendon transfer surgery. Margaret won high esteem from both peers and patients, specializing in eye problems of leprosy. They have been staff members at Vellore Christian Hospital, India, were among the founders of Schieffelin Leprosy Hospital and Training Centre in Karigiri, India. Paul was director and Margaret the head of the eye work at the U.S. Public Health Service's Gillis W. Long Hansen's Disease Center in Carville, Louisiana. Recipient of the Albert Lasker Award, Commander of the Order of the British Empire.



## “When the time had fully come”

*Gal 4 : 4 – 6 ... when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

Advent invites us to meditate on the fact that God intervenes in history taking into account the time and circumstances. Yet God is eternal; He is not like us - prisoners of passing time.

The whole history of the Old Testament tells us that His attention is on the fate of those human beings who have turned away from Him. Thus the Lord invites Abram to leave his country for another country that He wants to give him as his inheritance. This call tells us that God has a plan that He will achieve by enrolling in our history.

The history of the Old Covenant gradually reveals the plan, which will see its culmination on the occasion of the event of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Galatians. For centuries, the descendants of Abram, who became Abraham, father of all believers, were able to imagine that the rest of humanity was excluded, outside of God's plan. Yet throughout the history of the people of Israel, clues were given to readers / close observers of their fate, leaving clear glimpses that God had a plan which concerned all humanity.

When Jesus was born, very few people were ready to welcome the intrusion of God into our history. Included in that number were Simeon and Anna, the two characters who appear at the time of the presentation of the baby Jesus in the temple; even as the shepherds, the simple people who were watching over their flock by night, welcomed the good news of God's irruption into the tortuous history of human mankind.

Among the things that the coming of Jesus has changed, is the announcement of the end of the curse on the people affected by leprosy. In the commandments given to the people of Israel in the desert, leprosy is presented as a symbol of exclusion from communion, as it is with the sin which separates us from God. In the early days of His ministry, Jesus commands His disciples to go into the cities and villages of Israel, among other things, to cleanse the lepers. And whenever He has the opportunity to meet someone suffering with leprosy, without hesitation He violates the old commandment, welcoming and touching those which the law condemned to live in solitude and rejection.

How is it, that twenty centuries after the coming of Jesus, there are still so many people excluded because of this stigmatizing illness? Today we can see the changes finally happening. Leprosy is curable and the exclusion is no longer inevitable. But, when we think of all the distress suffered by those who do not know they are loved by God, the one who wants them to keep standing upright and serving Him, how is it that the progress we see takes so long?

What I want to remember about this is that even today God intervenes in our history “in His Time” and He invites us to be His co-workers to bring hope to those who are deprived.

**Pierre Geiser**

former National Director for Mission Lèpre (TLM France)





## Hope Alive!

*“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” Matthew 1:21 (All scriptures quoted from New King James version)*

Ever since the falling of man in the garden, God has made a promise of a Saviour and people of God has been looking forward to this promise. Scripture gives us records of great men of faith (Hebrew 11:39) who were hoping to see the fulfilment of God's promise. In the verse above God sent His angel to the poor family of Mary and Joseph to announce the birth of Jesus and thereby fulfil the promise He made at the beginning of time.

Jesus came and fulfilled His Father's will through His birth, death and resurrection; at His ascension He made a promise of coming back to give us full redemption both to us who believe and to the falling earth; for even the earth itself is groaning for redemption.

At the season of advent we remember the entrance of our saviour to this falling world and this is the period when our 'hope of redemption' which God promised from the beginning is rekindle.

A living hope activate our faith daily and help us to trust and obey God; now having being justify by faith, this 'hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been pour out on our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us' (Romans 5:5).

There may be time as leaders when we are face with challenges or responsibilities that look impossible and it's beyond our mental and physical ability; we wonder 'how can this be' or wonder 'how could God do something through us'. But a wise leader will respond the way Mary did: 'I am your servant, may it be as you have said' (Luke 1:38); with this positive response, a living hope that God will surely bring to past what He has promised comes alive or is rekindle in us, 'for with God all things are possible' (Matthew 19:26).

Therefore we are encouraged by the scripture to 'hold fast to our hope without wavering; for 'He who promise is faithful'

Let us therefore use this season of advent to keep our hope alive and consider one another in order to stir up love and good work... exhorting one another as we draw closer to our day of redemption' (Heb 10: 23-25)

### **Dr Bunmi Oluloto**

is The Leprosy Mission Country Leader for Niger and Chad. He is a Nigerian and has been working with the Leprosy Mission for over 20 years. He is married to Loveth Oluloto and they have 3 children namely; Blessing, Favour and Goodness.



## Immanuel

*The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')  
Matthew 1:23 (NIV)*

Is the thought that God is with us comforting, challenging or even confusing?

God with us might feel like a warm 'comfort blanket' or the cuddly toy beloved of my seven-year-old granddaughter. A kindly parent or grandparent who says, 'Don't worry: everything will be all right', whether they believe it will be or not.

God with us may be reassuring when we face pressure or pain, knowing that God, in Jesus Christ, has experienced everything, and more that the world can throw at us.

God with us might also be an ever present, possibly uncomfortable reminder of the wrong we do - in effect, our guilty conscience.

As He neared the end of His earthly life, Jesus prayed intimately for His disciples and for all believers, and this may provide an answer.

Praying to God the Father, Jesus says, 'All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them (the disciples)' (John 17:10). The thought that God with us means that we might reflect His glory is both humbling and challenging.

Jesus continues. 'My prayer is not that you take them out of this the world, but that you protect them from the evil one' (John 17:15). This is reassurance at a deeper level than pressure and pain.

Jesus prays not only for the disciples, but also for all those who believe in Him through their message (John 17:20). 'I have given them the glory that you gave me', Jesus continues, 'that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity' (John 17:22-23a).

Immanuel, God with us, can and does provide us with comfort, reassurance and challenge as individuals.

Immanuel, God with us, is also and importantly about our relationship with others and with the community within which He has placed us. That community may be the neighbourhood in which we live, the church where we worship, or the organisation for which we work.

Immanuel, God with us, provides comfort and reassurance to us as individuals. But this is only part of the story.

Immanuel, God with us, encourages and equips us to be the ones to bring Him glory.

Immanuel, God with us, challenges us to live in unity one with another. Does the knowledge that God is with us influence our day-to-day lives and relationships in practical ways? And is that reassurance reflected in the relationships, life and work of the TLM Fellowship?

**David Parry**

Former Chairman of TLM International



## “Look, your King is coming to you!”

The two disciples had been given some strange instructions by Jesus. They were in Bethphage on their way to Jerusalem, but they had been commanded to go into the village ahead of them and there they would find a donkey with her colt beside her. They had to untie them and bring them to Jesus, their Master. The disciples did what Jesus had told them. They brought the donkey and her colt, threw their cloaks over them and Jesus sat on them.

We can read this story in **Matthew 21: 1-9**. A large crowd followed Jesus, throwing their garments on the road and others cut branches from the trees and spread them out. The people were excited and shouted: *Praise God (Hosanna) for the Son of David!*

Matthew also tells us that all this took place to fulfil the old prophecy. *“Tell the people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey – riding on a donkey’s colt.”* Jesus, the Son of God is King and He is a King of Peace! According to the tradition of that time, a king who rode on a donkey was a King of Peace, unlike a king who rode on a horse who was a king of war!

When we celebrate Advent, we celebrate the King of peace, Jesus Christ, who is coming to us, to you and me, into our lives today! His Kingdom is so different from kingdoms here in this world. It is a Kingdom built of love from God Himself. This Kingdom has no borders where some people can be stopped, because of their ethnicity or skin colour. His Kingdom is eternal and cannot be destroyed by war.

You cannot see it with your eyes. We read in **Luke, 17:21** *“You won’t be able to say “Here it is” or “it’s over there!” For the kingdom of God is within you.* Jesus the King came to build His Kingdom within the human being, within you and me. All human beings, all people, all generations and all ethnic groups are invited into his Kingdom.

*Look, the King is coming to you!* These very personal words are there for you as well, in your situation, in your life. He wants to come to you with His love so you will be able to love others, even the people you have difficulties with! He wants to come to you with His peace so you will be able to create an atmosphere of peace around you. He builds His Kingdom within you and something very beautiful starts to blossom through you due to the love you receive from Him.

When I visited one of The Leprosy Mission’s Hospitals in India for the first time, I was so moved by what one of the patients said, a young woman: - *This is the first time in my life I’m feeling that I am respected and loved, not just an outcast!* This young woman had a very sad childhood. Her stepmother did not allow her to eat food or to sit together with the other family members. She was not allowed to see a doctor or to go to school. But there, at the hospital, she experienced love from nurses and doctors through their daily work.

The coming Advent will remind us that the King of Love has come into the world and that He is there for you wherever you are! Wishing you all a very Happy Advent!

**Gunnel Ericson**

Former National director TLM Sweden 2003-2010; member of PRG since 2011



## Love: The Strength of our Fellowship

*By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another [if you keep on showing love among yourselves]. John 13 : 35 – Amplified version*

We are in that special season of advent once again; this season is not just a time for festivity and merry making. It is more than that. It is the season of joy, of peace, of great tidings and a reminder of the expression of God's love for humanity. As we ponder on God's love for us, we too are encouraged to share His love with others, allowing the Lord to work in us and through us to give a helping hand to those in need.

Looking at the TLM Global Fellowship, you can't help but sense the bond of oneness that cuts across her multi-racial and multi-national membership. The strength and vibrancy of the TLM Global Fellowship is tied to its purpose and chronicle of rich history that testifies of the faithfulness of God over the last century. Our mandate to be a channel of Christ's love and compassion towards persons and communities affected by leprosy and disabilities across the world is a unique opportunity to be actively involved in the Great Commission.

We are a Fellowship. The word 'Fellowship' comes from the Greek word, KOINONIA, which means "to share in common." In John 13:35 Jesus highlighted an indicator that shows we truly belong to Him; this is reflected by our love for each other. The strength of the Global Fellowship can only be hinged and sustained on the expression of our genuine, unselfish, and unconditional love and support for one another. Our assignment to persons and communities affected by leprosy is all about sharing the love of Christ. But, we can only give what we have, we can only give from the abundance of what we have tasted and are experiencing amongst ourselves. A wise man once said, "The light that must travel the farthest, must shine the brightest at its base". **The very core of helping people stems from loving them.** Our impact only comes through authentic participation, with each part doing its share in love, for the benefit of every individual and the entire Global Fellowship which is knitted by a common divine vision that transcends geographical boundaries.

Jesus expressed that we must be committed to the love of the brethren in the same way that He was. He stated that this love toward the brethren was the necessary evidence to prove our authenticity as Christians to the world.

All through the New Testament, Jesus shows us that He takes personally, how we relate to His body. Our love, expressions of kindness, and ministry to any of our brothers and sisters in Christ is received as though they are done unto the Lord, Himself. *As members of the TLM Global Fellowship, it is important to always remember that we're all in this together.*

**Dr Sunday Udo**

Country Leader of TLM Nigeria



## Gratitude

### *Luke 17, 11-19*

What is there not to like about Christmas? Not a lot. However, as a child the thing I disliked the most was having to write the 'thank you' letters on Boxing Day. Letters like that to my Auntie Gwen. Dear Auntie Gwen would gift me a hand knitted sleeveless jumper every year. I found out later in life that they were always sleeveless as she struggled to get the arms on jumpers the same length.

Today, in many settings, gratitude seems to me to be a dying social norm. Often the phrase 'thank you' goes missing. Many also appear to have an entitlement mentality, "I want", "I demand", "it's my right to have", where gratitude and saying 'thank you' has become redundant.

Yet the problem, and I think it is a problem, the problem of ingratitude is not so modern.

There is a story in Luke's gospel of the group of people who were helped dramatically, but only 10% showed their gratitude. Jesus encountered ten men who had the stigma inducing and disabling disease of leprosy. Unlike today where, through their generous giving, supporters of the Leprosy Mission can offer a cure to people affected by leprosy, in those days there was no cure. The ten men with leprosy met Jesus on the outside the of village as they were not allowed to live near others. Like so many people with leprosy today, they were in a wretched state, no wonder they cried out to Jesus, "Have mercy on us".

And He did. He gave them instructions and all ten of them were healed from their leprosy almost immediately. It would transform the rest of their lives. Yet how sad that in their joy or eagerness to go tell their family they were now healed only one went back to Jesus to say 'thank you'.

Now before we become too judgemental of the nine, I wonder how often we pray, seeking God's answer to an issue, maybe of healing, of provision, of solution to an issue, and when it happens, we forget to go back to Him in gratitude and say 'thank you'. I know I am guilty.

The Leprosy Mission have an amazing privilege of being able to offer the life transforming cure from leprosy and rehabilitation from the disabilities it causes. Unlike the experience of Jesus with the nine, we rarely encounter ingratitude.

Leprosy sufferers are so used to being shunned and pushed away that they are overwhelmed by the kindness and support of Leprosy Mission staff across countries in Africa and Asia where we work.

To prove that gratitude is still alive and well, here's my challenge for you today. Intentionally go overboard by thanking and complimenting at least three people you encounter today. Like the former leprosy patients I encounter, their faces will light up. Thank you for listening.

**Peter Walker**

National Director of TLM England & Wales (since March 2011)



## Love has no Price

*"Come, you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:34-40*

Early in the morning, we leave Jiri, a town east of Nepal, known by walkers as the starting point for treks bringing them to the first base camp of Mount Everest. After a one hour Jeep ride through mountains, we leave our vehicle and continue our trip on foot. We start a three hour walk to visit Mr Bahadur Jivel. This patient affected by leprosy has been helped by the Mission to build a low cost house. The purpose of our visit is to conduct a small inaugural ceremony for this new house.

While walking on the rocky paths, I thought, "Is it good management of our resources to make so much effort to meet a single person? Yesterday we drove 10 hours to reach Jiri. Today we walked for a good part of the day." But at once the parable of the lost sheep crossed my mind, 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?' Love has no price!

While I am still thinking, I perceive a smiling young man sitting at the edge of the path. He is the son of our patient. He came to guide us up to the family house, which is still one and a half hours by foot. We arrive at our destination. We are warmly welcomed by a man badly damaged by leprosy, his hands, feet and eyes are affected: nevertheless, we can see the joy in this face as he meets us. In front of the house, all the family is gathered; his wife, their son, their daughter-in-law and their three grandchildren. In fact, this new house offers a roof to three generations. The primary school teacher of the village, as well as some notable people also come for the occasion. The ceremony can begin. After some words of dedication, I cut the inaugural ribbon. This ceremony, openly and publicly, reveals all its importance. It puts the spotlight on a man struck by a disease which too often leads to exclusion. Mr Jivel is the person we want specially honoured this day. People have come far to greet him, and participate in this dedication. This kind of event also contributes to the acceptance of people affected by leprosy by the community. We share a meal together then, after a time of fellowship, we leave and retrace our journey.

Seeing the happiness on the faces of this family, I found my reward in the time spent coming here. On our way back, my heart leapt with thankfulness. It **was** worth coming.

This experience shows me, through other eyes, the efforts the Mission sometimes spends to reach a single person.

### Eric Chollet

I'm retired since three years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.



## Shepherd in the Valley

**Psalm 23** must be the best known and, for some, the favourite of all the Psalms. It is often the one requested for weddings or funerals, or the one the pastor reads on the home visit or at the bedside. I always feel a bit concerned when we reach the first part of verse 4, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”*. I hope that the hearer doesn’t think their final hour has come! The alternative translation has *“...the darkest valley...”* and that may bring us nearer the truth of the matter.

There are many ‘dark valleys’ through which we may walk, but which need not be ‘the shadow of death’. Other different ‘shadows’ may come over us on life’s journeys. It might be helpful, as a devotional exercise, to consider our own words to complete the phrase according to the challenges facing us. So we might write, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of... unemployment or depression, relationship breakdown or concern for a loved one, poverty or illness, loneliness or leprosy... or anything else which puts our trust in the presence and protection of the Shepherd to the test.*

*“...I will fear no evil...”* -not that the Shepherd ‘immunises’ us against all hurtful experience, but that we need not fear any victory of the ‘evil one’ because of it. Why? Because my Shepherd is with me; His *“...rod and staff, they comfort me.”* No doubt the Shepherd’s rod and staff, -as for an earthly shepherd, are only used as necessary, -to guide, to correct, to rescue.... to *comfort*. And that word, *comfort*, speaks of giving strength (*‘forte’*); *‘com-fort’* means with strength; there is One alongside who is my strength.

As we look upon the Son of God made flesh we find in Him all that we could desire, all our human experience, yet in One who did not sin. He is Friend and Saviour, Brother and... *Shepherd*. The Shepherd goes on ahead; He has trodden our path before us; we know His voice and respond to that voice alone (John 10). The sense and sound of His presence are all around us; we hear His voice behind us, saying *“This is the way; walk in it”* (Isaiah 30:21) -even if it is a way of tears, a valley of the shadow of our struggles, whatever they may be.

So take a moment today, or sometime this week if you can. Prayerfully ask yourself, ‘What is it that I am going through right now?’ Walk with your Shepherd; write with the Psalmist, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of [.....] I will not fear the ‘evil one’, for you (Jesus, my Lord, my Shepherd) are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me, -they will guide, rescue, correct and protect me.”*

This is the goodness and mercy of God which will surely follow us all the days of our lives, wherever our faith-journeys take us. May the Good Shepherd accompany, protect and bless His beloved lambs to the very end of their journey. May He help *you* feel His presence with you today, and very clearly bless you in your walk with Him.

### David Beazley

David Beazley began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal ‘chaplain’ to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He now pastors a Church in South-West England part time, freeing time for TLM as a volunteer speaker and continuing on the E&W Board. He chairs the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM as leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows.



## The Light of the World

*Reading: John 1:1-14*

*Jesus said "I am the light of the world" John 8:12*

*"You are the light of the world" Matthew 5:14*

The track meandered through the rolling hills of Southern Africa. The odd thorn bush and termite "castle" punctuated the golden grass swaying gently in the breeze. Here and there outcrops of rocks stood out like giant mushrooms. The early morning sun bathed the countryside in a delicate light.

My vehicle stirred up a cloud of red dust that coated the sparse vegetation on the sides of the road. The sound of birds and crickets and the occasional gazelle leaping gracefully away from the car were reminders that I was not alone in the world.

Suddenly I was almost blinded by a bright light emanating from the grass. My curiosity was greater than the fear of snakes, so I stopped the car and walked in the direction of the light. To my surprise, I discovered an empty tin.

There was no means of knowing if it had contained canned vegetables, peaches, pears, fruit salad or jam... . As it had been stripped of all labels or paper, impossible to tell where or by what firm it had been manufactured.

Just an old, discarded, empty tin, but lying in such a way that it captured the sun's rays and transmitted the light with great effect.

Jesus said: "Let your light so shine..." Matthew 5:16 Sometimes our culture, tradition, prejudice, egoism, wealth, education, lifestyle, denominationalism... can make it difficult for us to reflect His light! We need to be emptied of self, stripped of labels and exposed to Him so that His light may shine through us.

*Prayer: Jesus, light of the world, shine in me and through me that I may reflect you in what I am and do.*

*Thoughts: The One who said "I am the light of the world", wants to be my light. Have I received Him as my Saviour?*

### Silvano Perotti

Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI

Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.

Worked with TLMI until 1990.





## **“He Lifted Me Out...”**

*“I waited patiently for the Lord, he inclined his ear towards me and hear my cry for help, He lifted me out of the slimy pit,, out of the mud and mire and set my feet on the rock and gave me a firm place to stand”.*

*Psalm 40:1*

We live in a troubled world, difficulties, challenges, threats, mourning and disease may seem beyond our strength and likely to overwhelm us. Still, a glimmer of hope persists, and we come to realize that the Lord Jesus, our God, and Saviour is aware of what we are going through. He is close to you and me and is inclining his ear to hear your cry, however weak or trembling it may be.

This text is echoed in the song of Mary who says “My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant”. This is the God we trust in, we have the confidence that He cares and is mindful of us, however small or insignificant we are, He will keep his promises as we wait patiently. It reminds me of the Hymn, “How can it be that, Thou my God should care for me!” Yes, this the reality of God’s grace that we celebrate at Christmas!

Transformation is the Promise given to us, taken out from the mud, and the abysmal darkness of despair, Jesus lifts us out, his life has been given to wash away all the filth and bad smell of our selfishness, and he sets us on a solid rock where now, we can stand firm, yes transformed and firm.

The Logo of the Leprosy Mission is an inspiration for me of the transforming power of Jesus, as he bows down to pick me up and place me, to stand on a rock, and my desire is that those who are affected by leprosy, may likewise, through the transforming power of Christ be lifted up to stand.

As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, may we rejoice, like Mary, for the Lord our God is mindful of each one of us and stands by our side in whatever circumstance of life we go through; He the Lord, is the rock on which we stand confidently and without fear.

Lord increase our patience as we wait on you!

### **Dr Jean-Pierre Bréchet, MD**

Medical Consultant and TLM Country leader for ANGOLA.

Member of the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, I am retired as of end of December 2015.

I have been with TLM for 10 years and with ALM for 15 years.

Today I am Leprosy Project Director for Solidariedade Evangélica, a local registered NGO.

Previously I have been a missionary for the Swiss Alliance Mission- SAM, in Angola, since 1978.



## The Light

*“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”. John 1:5*

Here in the northern hemisphere advent is a time of darkness. December 21 is the shortest day of the year. No wonder we fill our houses with candles and Christmas lights. Light is so important, a blue sky and sun even on a cold day make you feel so much better.

Over the past year, being rather ill, I have had some dark days that have nothing to do with the weather. Yet in it all, the Lord has sent people who with their encouragement and love have been like candles for me. Some of them have even been like blazing torches. The wonderful thing is, as it says in John 1:5 “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”. No matter how small you think your light is it will have an effect on the darkness. The darkness will not be able to put it out. Isn't that great? I think sometimes that we forget this and are overwhelmed by the dark world around us. It must have seemed that way for Mary and Joseph as they had to cope with the Roman occupation and the seeming senselessness of having to make a journey to their hometown for a census. That and the lack of accommodation must've made that first Christmas seem very dark. So the Lord sent His light bearers to celebrate the birth of his son. Light bearers in the form of singing angels but also in the form of rough and enthusiastic shepherds.

Christmas is a reminder that the light has come into the world to show us the way and pierce the darkness. Martin Luther King Jr said “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. “Light and love are strongly linked as I have found out this year. Each greeting, offer of care and support, visit, encouragement and letter have brought love and light. May we do that for all that we meet. May we be Christ's love and light bearers in this Advent season.

### June Nash

I have worked for the Leprosy Mission for 35 years. At first I was on the mission field in Papua New Guinea and then Ethiopia. In the beginning I did leprosy control but then moved into the training of health workers. It was a privilege to serve overseas with TLM for 20 years. I returned to be part of the team in Brentford, firstly as global training adviser, then HR Director and lastly as Knowledge Management Director. I am now retired but being a part of the Leprosy Mission never really leaves you. I continue to hold the work in my heart through prayer and visits to Brentford.



## The Word became Flesh

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory... John 1,14*

Whenever I watch wildlife programmes on television I think of David Attenborough. He has made us so conscious of the world of nature and its wonders. Someone said that when he dies he should be put in shoe box and buried at the bottom of the garden with the hamsters, but that's another story...

Recently I watched a programme on grey whales. Their beauty left me speechless – for a moment anyway – their twists and turns, their graceful pirouettes as they swam in and out of the picture, now close up, now disappearing into the green depths of the water.

The commentator admitted that their lives are still very private and that we know little about them. He finished by saying, "Maybe it's good that there are things we don't know. We need to keep the mystery of life."

Whatever the subject, we want to know more. That's what science is about, observing and recording, satisfying our curiosity, adding to the knowledge we already have. And that's fine, but every time we find an answer it seems to raise more questions.

The mystery is still there. Reminding us that we can never know everything, because the source, the prime mover of creation, is that power we call God. A God whom we believe is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, but even here the mystery remains. However much we know of Him, there's more to learn, more to experience.

There's a time to measure and analyse, but there's also a time to sit back, accept, and say. "Thank you!"

(from 'Slower than Butterflies', with the kind permission of Jo-Anne Thomson and Judith Merrell from TLM Trading)

### Eddie Askew

Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)



## For a Child has been born, a Son has been given to us...

*Isaiah 9 : 5*

A few years ago I was on a spiritual retreat in silence and walking along a dirt road, meditating, when I saw a man with an amputated leg standing in the grass (it was rainy season) on crutches. He looked at me, and I noticed suffering in his face. In fact, his face showed the signs of years and years of crying... I decided to break my silence and to greet him.

'Hello', I said, 'who are you'? (I was surprised to see him as I know about most of the disabled persons in our town, having worked for years with them). 'I am Mahamat', he simply said.

'Where do you live'? I asked him. 'Just over there, behind me, on the far side of the field. I am being paid very badly to guard a small garden for someone. My wife just had a baby. Do you want to come and see?' I was on a silent retreat, but I couldn't resist. Who was this man, and why was his face so terribly sad?... So I said 'yes', and went with him.

We went to a small, rundown single room house and saw his wife with a new-born baby. The family was clearly very poor. There were a few more children around in worn-out clothes. 'Why do you not have a tricycle Mahamat, why did you not search for us?' He simply said: 'I have no money to purchase one...' I told him that I was on a silent retreat and would come back for a visit with the president of the local Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) in one week, and we would provide him with a tricycle to get around.

I went back to the retreat centre and into my silence... amazed... a Man standing in the grass on crutches... a face marked by years and years of weeping... a new-born baby...

I finished the retreat and went back to Mahamat with the President of the DPO. When our car passed through the millet field and stopped in front of his house, Mahamat came to greet us with a tremendous smile. Later on he told me that when he had heard the car driving up he knew that he would find a way out of his hidden life just outside the town in a lonely garden living on a 'salary' of 5.000 CFA (£6,3) a month...

He told me his life story; his above-the-knee amputation in hospital to save his life after having stayed for a week in a local market, his leg being crushed after being deliberately hit by a lorry driven by a young colleague; he had almost died...

His relatives, not knowing what to do with him, gave him a wife, and he found 'a job' guarding a garden, out in the fields... He would love to receive a tricycle to get around...

We ordered a tricycle at the DPO and managed to get him into our town after having built a small local house on an empty piece of land belonging to the DPO. Through advocacy his children were taken on board by a schooling programme.

When our church compound needed someone to look after its water pump we proposed Mahamat. And if you see him nowadays... His face has completely changed. The traces of his tears have faded away and been replaced by a tremendous smile. He is proud of his work and has been the best guard we have ever had at the compound.

### **Geeske Zijp**

nationality Dutch, with TLM since 1992. From 1992-1995 in Chad, from 1995 – 1997 in Zaire (former DRC), from 1998 – nowadays back in Chad and currently its programme manager.



## **“We Forgot the Baby Jesus!”**

*“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”*

*Matthew 6,33*

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century McKean had developed into a large Christian leprosy settlement, where Christmas was a wonderful celebration of differing events. We were especially fascinated by the Christmas float procession around the roads to the church. Teams of patients and groups of staff worked secretly for weeks in advance planning their contribution on the Christmas theme, and working out how to make it mobile and how to light it. Every year as darkness fell on Christmas night a long line of wonderful creations, on platforms on top of whatever wheels were available, began assembling, along with beautifully dressed teams to pull push or drive their float, and carry the colourful lanterns .

One Christmas evening I was just about to leave home to join the gathering throngs when someone came running to our door in a panic. “Please help us. We got everything ready for the float about the Christmas story. We have all the costumes and decorations and lights. It is perfect. BUT WE FORGOT THE BABY JESUS!”

I forget now whether we donated an infant son or a doll to the cause that night, but frequently those words come back to me. How often we can get caught up by the trappings, and neglect the key thing that really matters. And it isn't just at Christmas. It's easy to focus on getting the proposals and reports and budgets right, and on time, but in the process fail to take time and energy for personal interaction and winsome witness to the individuals we are serving in Jesus' name.

What does “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” mean for me today?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus it is such a privilege to know You and to serve You. Please give me eyes to see how I can best use my time in doing that today.*

### **Heather Smith**

Served with TLM in Thailand 1969-2009, and continues there as Asst. Director and Head of Aged Care Development at McKean Rehabilitation Center in Chiang Mai



## “There was no Room for them to Lodge in a House”

*Luke 2,3-7 (quoted in New English Bible wording)*

A couple of weeks ago I was applying for an Indian visa, to go to a research workshop in Mumbai. The Indian government not only wanted to know my own details but also “where were your father and mother born?” and “were your grandparents born in India or Pakistan?” To British people like myself born in 20<sup>th</sup> century, one’s current “home town” is unlikely to be the same as one’s place of birth, and it is unlikely that in either place there are many relatives’ homes. All over the world people are moving around, the populations are shifting from rural to urban areas. In Nepal where Kathmandu city has seen massive growth in recent years; but immediately after the 2015 earthquakes people streamed out heading for their “home villages”- to the places where they had been born, where they had land, or where they had relatives. At their great annual festival of “Desai” Nepalis eagerly leave the places where they actually live and work to go “home”. - Similarly Bangladeshis at their “Eid” festival head off towards “home”. “Bari”, their real home as opposed to their “basa” which is the place where they usually stay! But they also may have to go their bari for official business, like obtaining an identity card or passport. In 2007 every person had to be registered and they could not just do it wherever they were but had to be registered in their “own village”. I wonder how many generations must pass before a migrant family loses its sense of being “away from home”. - Many centuries ago in England, when the Normans wanted to know how many subjects they had, the Domesday book was compiled, but not for polling- it was like the Roman census mentioned by Luke, for tax purposes!

The rulers decreed people must “go home” so people left the towns and cities, their animals, their houses & their friends, and travelled to the place where they belonged. Mary and Joseph had to go “each to his own place” but they were from the same place, Bethlehem. For them maybe it was something of a spiritual journey as well as physical journey as they recalled proudly that they were both from the Royal family of David. They might have looked forward to reunions with relatives not seen for a long time. It would probably have been normal practice for travellers to stay at relatives’ houses, as in Nepal or Bangladesh today.

We do not see much in England these days: the young bride going “home” to stay with her own relatives for her first delivery. Certainly in India it is usual to want to be with family for the momentous event. Maybe Mary longed for family help at such a time. But somehow, none of the relatives’ houses were open to her, there was no welcome from an aunt or grandmother. Was she sidelined or excluded because women had looked at the calendar and deduced that this baby was apparently conceived before the wedding? Was young Mary, at a time when she most needed the kindly companionship of an older woman, left alone (except for faithful Joseph)? Had female relatives in nearby houses hardened their heart to her in her predicament?

*“and the time came for her to be delivered”*: maybe they had travelled early so as to arrive before the baby was due, and maybe they stayed later to allow Mary to recoup her strength. But there her child was born, in David’s town, amongst David’s descendants, and there their names were written down in the census book. But this child was no mere human baby, a citizen of Bethlehem or of Israel, but actually He was the promised One who had come from a life in heaven, for His birth was a transition from His heavenly Home to His “mission posting” in this world. After many years of growth and ministry, one day He would return to His real Home – not Bethlehem nor Nazareth but Heaven to be with His Father. - As we sing “from heaven You came helpless Babe, entered our world, Your glory veiled”, or “God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus...”, let us honour that Child who showed us the way Home to our Father and His.

### **Dr. Cynthia Ruth Butlin, known as Ruth.**

British (63). My service with TLM is as follows: 1981- 1982: sponsored by TLM for 1 academic year at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, UK. 6 weeks of linguistics course. 1982- 1991: Medical officer at Richardson Leprosy Hospital Miraj, in India, under Dr PD Samson. 1991- 2001: medical superintendent at Anandaban Leprosy hospital in Nepal. March - June 2001: Furlough. June 2001- 2003: Superintendent Purulia leprosy hospital and homes, West Bengal in India. 2003- 2007: Medical advisor at DBLM (hospital and field programme), Nilphamari, Bangladesh (then ended my time as expatriate staff). 2007-now Voluntary speaker for TLMEW. 2013- now, skilled volunteer, sponsored by TLMEW, mainly working for DBLM hospital and rural health programmes in Bangladesh (also some work for TLMNepal)



## Emmanuel – God with us!

*Luke 2: 8-20*

Christmas means different things to different people. Most people look forward to Christmas for a variety of reasons – holidays, gifts, good food, special activities, good times with family and friends. However, there is a danger that we get caught up so much with these activities that we seem to lose focus of the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

The shepherds were poor, humble and not so learned. It was just another ordinary day in their lives and as they were going about their regular work, God intervened in a most dramatic way, to tell them about the birth of His Son, through angelic announcement and an angelic choir. Their initial fear was replaced by joy and excitement and they began to enjoy the show that God put up for them. The show came to an end but the story did not end there. They obeyed the angel's command and went looking for the Messiah even though they had no specific address, only a sign. When they found the Baby, they praised and worshiped Him and shared that experience with anyone who cared to listen to them. People around them noticed a difference in them. Looking back on the very first Christmas, obedience seems to be the core response of the major players – Mary, Joseph (both against all odds), the Magi and of course the Shepherds. They obeyed and their lives were transformed, they found the real reason for celebrating when they focused on the Messiah.

As we celebrate Christmas, in the midst of all our activities and enjoyment, let us not forget the reason for our celebration, Jesus, and let us thank God for His presence with us – Emmanuel, God with us!

**Dr Sunil Anand**

Executive Director, The Leprosy Mission Trust India  
Delhi, India.  
Been with TLM for the past 32 years.



## A Gift Worth Unwrapping

### *Philippians 2, 5-8*

Celebrating Christmas in different parts of the world can be special, even if it does mean being away from your own family. I recall the first Christmas Shirley and I spent apart from our large extended family. We had two young children at the time and had just moved to Papua New Guinea.

We came to realise for the very first time that being a part of the family of God can be as rich, as rewarding and, on occasions, quite as demanding as our natural family. We also realised just how much western Christians have been influenced by the secularization and commercialization of this Christian festival. Each year the gap between the meaning and the celebration seems to grow wider.

The story of birth of Jesus has been softened and given a 'glow' that may not have been present as his parents desperately sought accommodation for the birth. The poverty, the hardship, the iron rule of Rome was so evident and perhaps meant to signal that the life for this new child was to be anything but easy. But it was the manner by which God chose to become flesh and to dwell and die among his creation.

Philippians 2 verse 5-8 calls us to imitate Christ in this respect. *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!"*

Perhaps the most precious thing about Christmas is the time spent with the people we love the most. And in many ways, that really does demonstrate the true meaning of Christmas because it was the amazing love that God had for his creation that caused him to offer up his son and send him among us, to live and die and overcome death for us. It was the love of the Father in offering his son and it was the obedience of the son that made it a reality for us. What a fantastic gift...and one that we should share with others.

Perhaps the very BEST gift we could offer during Christmas 2015 is to share that good news with someone else. I sense that there are more people open to hearing the gospel than at any time during my life...but I also sense that never before have Christians been so silent about their faith and so covered into silence.

This is a wonderful story of God's gift to humanity...let's make sure we share it with as many as we can during this Christmas season...let us determine to 'unwrap' the Christmas story for someone else this Christmas.

### **Ken Martin**

I joined The Leprosy Mission on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1978 and the Queensland Secretary (now director) and served in that role until 1<sup>st</sup> September 1980 when I became the National Director for TLM in Australia. I was appointed when the then serving National Director, Bill Edgar, moved to London as Communications Director under Eddie Askew. I was Australian National Director for 10 years and in October 1990 was appointed to the International Office as Director for Support and Development. I was in that role until May 1996 when I returned to Australia and became the National Director for Interserve, who shared an office with TLM. In 2001 I was elected to the newly formed International Board and was on the board for the maximum 8 years and completed my term in 2009. After a short break I elected as Vice was Chairman and rejoined the board in that capacity and in 2013 was elected Chairman.





## Through a Glass – Face to Face

*“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12*

I have loved astronomy since childhood [a long time ago!] and enjoy making telescopes. The main component of a backyard telescope is a concave mirror. After weeks of grinding a thick disc of glass to a depth of several millimetres, several hours of polishing produce a smooth surface which gathers the light from the stars, producing pin-sharp images. The mirror needs a coating of silver to be fully reflective, but an un-silvered polished mirror works surprisingly well.

As I near the end of the polishing process, I encourage myself to complete the job by putting the mirror on the ground and then, standing on a ladder, I look down into it, with my back to the night sky. By bobbing and weaving in my best imitation of Mohammed Ali, I can line up my head with a star and the mirror, and the mirror, all the time hidden in the darkness, suddenly floods with light. It's an amazing experience and the result encourages me to keep going until the mirror is as perfect as I can make it.

Great as that first image is – we call it first light – I know that the image from the silvered mirror will make the un-silvered image look like a pale imitation. The quest for the perfect mirror is a hard journey. Mirrors get scratched and the shape may be wrong. The grinding and polishing stages have to be worked through several times before reaching the desired result. Making a mirror is as much a test of character as it is of technical skills, which I suppose is why there is a fair bit of rivalry between those of us engaged in these projects.

The trouble is that none of us is ever satisfied. No matter how good the mirror is, we always long for one that is bigger. Larger mirrors gather more light, allowing us to see fainter objects and revealing more details. We always feel that our glasses are a little dark.

This helps me understand some of Paul's longing in 1 Corinthians 13 – who else had insights into the Gospel like Paul? Years spent studying his epistles won't exhaust their depths, despite which, he says “I know in part”.

Many of you reading this have served the Mission well for many years, but will feel the same way about your work. ‘There is still so much to learn about leprosy’; ‘What are the emerging trends in fund-raising’; ‘How can I improve my photographs.’ I see that as a healthy aspect of the Leprosy Mission – none of us are complacent. God has placed within us a desire to achieve more – not in the way that the world measures achievement – but achievement according to His Kingdom standards [Amos 7:7-9].

Ask Him today to give you the determination to pursue the vision that He has placed in your heart. The toughest part of making a telescope mirror is the point where I realise that the partially polished disc on which I have laboured for so long is no good and I have to determinedly compel myself to place it face down on the grinding tool, at a stroke undoing long weeks of sweat and tears. As the sound of the glass being ground away fills my workshop, my frustration melts, as I realise that I have a fresh opportunity to make something perfect, something worthy of reflecting the glory of His creation. Today is a fresh opportunity for you too to reflect His glory in your work, knowing that one day, that you too will see Him, face to face.

### **Peter Laubscher**

Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he's not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Bunmi Oluloto Dr	11 December		Psalm 23	17 December
Christine Osman	3 December		Psalm 40,1	19 December
David Beazley	17 December		Isaiah 9,5	22 December
David Parry	12 December		Isaiah 52,7	6 December
Eddie Askew	21 December		Matth 1,21	11 December
Eric Chollet	16 December		Matth 1,23	12 December
Geeske Zijp	22 December		Matth 6,33	23 December
Geoff Warne	29 November		Matth 21,1-9	13 December
Gunnel Ericson	13 December		Matth 25,34-40	16 December
Heather Smith	23 December		Mark 1,41	9 December
Henno Couprie	7 December		Luke 1,26-38	2 December
Jean-Pierre Bréchet Dr	19 December		Luke 1,26-38	3 December
Joyce Missing	6 December		Luke 1,5-25	1 December
June Nash	20 December		Luke 1,46-66	4 December
Ken Martin	26 December		Luke 2,3-7	24 December
Linda Todd	4 December		Luke 2,14	6 December
Mollie Clark	1 December		Luke 2,8-20	25 December
Paul Brand Dr OBE	9 December		Luke 13,18-19	29 November
Paul du Plessis Dr	5 December		Luke 15,1-32	7 December
Peter Laubscher	27 December		Luke 17,11-19	15 December
Peter Walker	15 December		John 1,4-5	30 November
Pierre Geiser	10 December		John 1,5	20 December
Piet Both Dr	8 December		John 1,14	21 December
Raju, Dr PLN	2 December		John 1-14	18 December
Ruth Butlin Dr	24 December		John 13,35	14 December
Silvano Perotti	18 December		1 Cor 13,12	27 December
Sunday Udo Dr	14 December		Gal 4,4-6	10 December
Sunil Anand Dr	25 December		Ephesians 1,3-8	8 December
Trevor Durston	30 November		Philippians 2 ,5-8	26 December
			2 Tim 2,5	5 December