

Global Vision



A newsletter for friends of the Global Mission Institute, Luther Seminary

Vol. 15, No. 3, Pentecost 2005

Godspeed

After 11 Years, Ekka Family Returns to India

By Shelley Cunningham

A week before Nihar Minz Ekka left India to come to the United States to begin her studies at Luther Seminary, her parents came to her after their evening devotions. They said, "God is taking you to the U.S. as a missionary. That is your mission field. We don't know what that means, but we need to give that message to you."

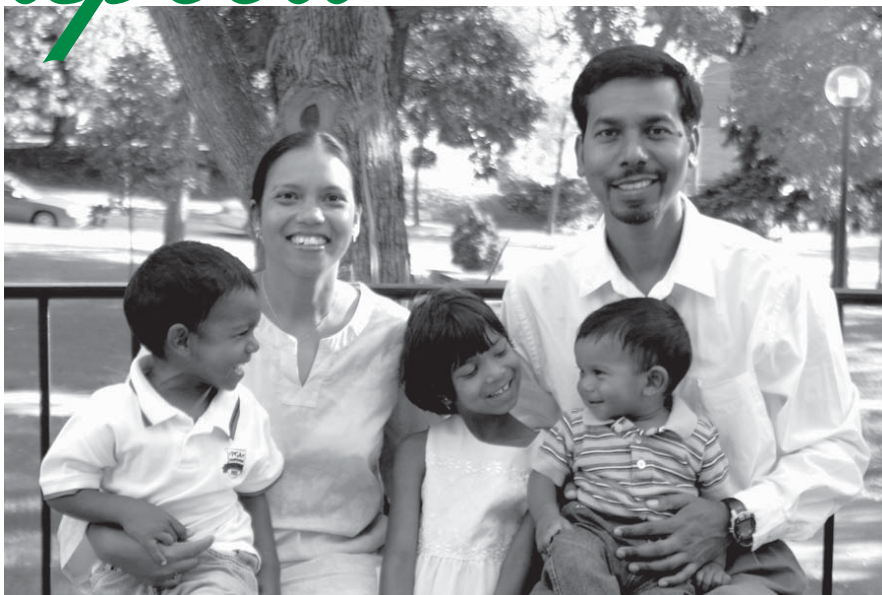
In the eleven years since that day, Ekka has indeed been a missionary

– a missionary who has built bridges between international students, congregations and Luther Seminary.

She became involved with GMI as a student worker in 1994, when she came to St. Paul from Ranchi, India, to begin work on her master of theology degree. Shortly after, she joined the advisory board. In 1997, she was named GMI representative for the office of seminary relations. A year ago, she became assistant director.

All along the way, she has been a tireless advocate for GMI and Luther Seminary with countless congregations, donors and friends. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship.

"I think you could say that I needed the GMI, and it needed me," she said. "GMI needed a face to make their



After 11 years as the 'face of GMI,' Nihar Minz Ekka, Neeraj Ekka, and their children Urbas, 3, Maani, 5, and Puna, 1, returned to India in November.

ministry 'real' for congregations. I needed a place to start in my ministry."

Her work with GMI gave her the opportunity to be part of God's work as she shared the GMI story. "One year – I think it was 1998 – I think I preached in a congregation or spoke at a church forum every Sunday but three. God revealed to me that I am

called to share what God is doing throughout the world, what God can do even through a simple person like me. My goal has been to help congregations create excitement and raise awareness about mission and their part in it."

She has also been instrumental in integrating GMI and the international student community into Luther Seminary life. "My very first week here, I was sitting in the dining room and I felt like there was something missing, a connection that wasn't yet made. I became a missionary within the seminary community."

Now, potluck dinners and international festivals draw

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The GMI Mission:

The Global Mission Institute provides critical support to Luther Seminary in its task of developing global mission leaders, partnering with the church in fulfillment of the great commission.

Second Visiting Schiotz Professor Arrives Soon

Dr. Monica J. Melanchthon, the next Schiotz Visiting Professor at Luther Seminary, will join the faculty in January. She presently serves



as a professor of Old Testament and the Head of the Department of Women's Studies at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India. She comes from the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church and has studied at Bangalore University, Serampore University, and Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC).

Melanchthon will team teach Pentateuch and Confessing Christ in Asia during the spring 2006 semester, as well as an elective course in summer 2006. In addition to teaching, she plans to research biblical texts on women to discern insights they might offer to their understanding of reconciliation. These insights will be used to examine Lutheran positions on reconciliation and the mission of the church.

"I am particularly looking forward to the conversations in the classroom and the responses and reactions to biblical interpretations of Indian and other Asian readers of the Bible, and the emerging christologies that Asian people are articulating," she said. "I know I will gain a lot from being there. But I am also anxious to share with the community developments in the area of Biblical interpretation and the shifts in mission paradigms in India.

During her time at Luther Seminary, she will be the plenary speaker at the Annual Lutheran Mission Conference and is available to speak in area congregations. If you are interested in hosting Dr. Melanchthon at your congregation, please contact Orin Cummings, GMI relations coordinator, at 651-641-3595.

Director's Corner

International Alumni/ae Build Networks and Foster Partnerships

"You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us friends."

These are the words of a young Indian delegate, Vengal Azariah, at the 1910 world missionary conference in Edinburgh. Azariah had experienced a lack of mutual understanding between European and "indigenous" missionaries. His words, which allude to 1 Corinthians 13, are still a challenge today. Although more than 60 percent of the world's Christians now live in the "Third World," the predominance of the western side in partnership endeavors tends to continue. Churches in the West are economically better off than their counterparts in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Political crises do not threaten our lives, nor do they even interrupt the academic year. Theologians in the U.S. and Europe have easy access to academic resources. There is an inequality in our life conditions, and this inequality can have repercussions on partnerships.

Yet, as Christians we know about the distinctive nature of Christian solidarity through the community founded in Christ, a solidarity which is only inadequately expressed in the term "partnership." In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes that "we shall all come together to that oneness of our faith and knowledge of the Son of God." Only together, not on our own, can we attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

At Luther Seminary we are strengthening and formalizing our international partnerships. It is fairly evident that in this process of exchange we receive a lot. Just imagine what it means for our students to learn about peace and reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa, or about engagement with people of other faiths in multi-religious India, or about mission and confession in Tanzania where churches, including the Lutheran church, are growing. There is no doubt that international exchange is an extremely important learning ground for theological education.

The contribution of our international students and international alumni/ae in this process can hardly be exaggerated. They not only help to educate our community here about the global church, they also learn from each other. When they return to their home countries, they represent Luther Seminary in many regions of the world, and they help to build bridges. It is important to foster such exchanges. GMI therefore heartily welcomes and supports the international students' initiative to establish an International Alumni/ae Caucus. We are grateful for all the work of our international students and alumni/ae. We give special thanks to Nijhar Minz Ekka and Neeraj Ekka with Maani, Urbas and Puna who have been so important for GMI. We are grateful for your support of them.

We know that the establishment of partnerships is a long and difficult process. We are aware that there will be shortcomings and failings. But we will try to form relationships which are mutually beneficial and strive towards the ideals expressed in 1 Corinthians – hope, trust and perseverance. International students and international alumni/ae play a crucial role in this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frieder Ludwig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F'.

Swanson Dives into History, Research on Sabbatical

By Shelley Cunningham

Cross-cultural conversation, travel, writing, and a little sleuthing: it was all part of a year's work for Mark Swanson, associate professor of Christian history and Islam, as he spent July 2004-June 2005 on sabbatical leave.

The travel included time spent in India, a country he hadn't spent much time in previously. He was in India for one of a series of conversations around the topic of "Interrogating Mission." The Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton and the United Theological College in Bangalore, India, invited top North American and Asian theologians to explore the question, "What does Christian mission look like, especially in a context such as that of India, where Christians are in the minority?"

Swanson was one of about a dozen scholars who prepared the papers whose ideas anchored the discussion. He wrote two essays for the colloquy process: one on what Christians can learn from Muslims in India (since they, too, are in the minority in a largely Hindu country); the other on the importance of hospitality to theological education – as seen in light of the biblical narrative, church historical perspective, and cultural traditions.

"Many of these reflections were grounded in conversations we had in the GMI managing board two or three years ago," he said. "We felt GMI's aim was to become a 'nexus of hospitality,' to help Luther Seminary be a place that offers hospitality to others, but also a place where students can learn how to receive hospitality, by going out to places where they are depending on the hospitality of others.

"It's important to theological education because much of what we're doing is learning how to make space, not only in our community but also in our thinking, in our hearts and minds, for those who are different from ourselves – reaching out to and opening ourselves to Christians across the centuries and across the water, as well as those who are not Christian."

The revised papers from the conversations are being compiled into a book that will be published next year.

Swanson also spent time in Egypt teaching and doing research.

In January, he taught a short course on Arabic theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC). He also laid the groundwork for a class this coming January: ten Luther Seminary students will join together with ETSC students for an exploration of Christian existence and Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt. "We want this to be a mutual learning experience, with equal respect and representation from both the North American and Egyptian contexts," he said. "This idea also comes out of the thinking of the GMI, that any overseas partnership efforts be ones where both sides can learn and grow together."

Swanson Accepts Call to LSTC

On Nov. 7, Mark Swanson announced that he has accepted a call to the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago to serve as professor of Christian-Muslim studies and interfaith relations. He will remain at Luther Seminary through the 2005-2006 school year and begin at LSTC July 1.

"We offer Mark and [his wife] Rosanne our congratulations and support for this new challenge," President Rick Bliese wrote to the seminary community. "Mark has assured me that he will work hard to make sure that his students are able to make a smooth transition."

More information will be included in the February issue of Global INSight, the biannual supplement to Global Vision.



Mark Swanson shares slides of icons found on the walls of the monastery of St. Antony, during a presentation on some of the research he did while on sabbatical. The monastery of St. Antony is an early-church monastery in Egypt whose artwork has been restored.

He was also invited to participate in a study project on the monastery of St. Paul, a little-known pilgrimage spot near the Red Sea believed to be the hermitage of St. Paul of Thebes. Because there wasn't enough material available to write a narrative history of the monastery, Swanson had to do a fair amount of detective work to track down stories and details. Then, he said, he looked at the material he collected against the background of Egyptian church history.

"The main thing I learned was that the church is sustained in remarkable ways," he said. "Particular institutions within the church may rise and fall, but even when very famous monasteries go into decline, there is a revival somewhere else."

Swanson will present some of what he discovered at conferences in Cordova, Spain, in November, and at the University of Minnesota in December.

Finally, much of his time was spent working on a book on the medieval Coptic Orthodox patriarchs. It will be one of a three volume set entitled *The Popes of Egypt*. Swanson's volume will explore how the Christian church strove to remain faithful while living under Islamic rule from the time of the Arab conquest in 641 to the Ottoman conquest in 1517.

International Student Profile

Tacho Dominguez

I grew up in poverty," says Eustacio "Tacho" Dominguez, a Luther Seminary Master of Arts graduate from Atlacomulco, Mexico. "I lived in a village that had been exploited and poverty stricken for many generations and my own future would have been equally grim except for two factors: Unlike most of my peers, I was raised in a religion that studied the Bible and I recognized the value of getting an education. This allowed me to break free from the binding chains of bitter hopelessness and poverty that plague many Mexican people."

Dominguez was raised in the Interdenominational Christian Church in Mexico (ICI), a small 73 year-old indigenous church body influenced by a blend of Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist faiths. In direct contrast to the reigning religious culture around them, the ICI emphasizes scripture reading and teaches that salvation is through the risen Christ by grace alone, rather than through commonly practiced rituals like mandas that only increase the burden of poverty. A manda is an amount of money set aside every year to pay a specific saint or virgin because of a promise made by one of their ancestors.

Growing up in the ICI, Dominguez learned that Christian faith meant displaying mutual understanding, equality, compassion, love, and service towards one another. In an effort to more fully follow that call to live out a life of service, Dominguez was determined to become educated. Since there are no high schools or colleges in rural areas, he moved to Toluca City, Mexico to pursue his dream. "It was very demanding," Dominguez recalls. "High school is not free here, so I had to work every day after school until late at night in order to make it possible for my family to pay my way."

While in college Dominguez became involved with the Mazahua Mission,



The Dominguez family – Tacho, Sally, and children Adriana, Jacob and Neomi – returned to Mexico this summer to lead a school and train lay leaders for the church.

a religious organization committed to improving the lives of the poverty-stricken natives in the Mazahua Valley of Mexico. He encouraged Mazahua children to complete elementary school and junior high. The program was so successful that some of the children wanted to attend high school and college as well. Dominguez and his American wife, Sally, received funding from Calvary Lutheran Church in Minneapolis to build a safe, nurturing Christian home near Toluca City for these children to live in while attending school. The home opened in 1995 and was christened the Mexican Indigenous University Center (MIUC).

Ten years later the Dominguez family still answers God's call to this ministry of learning and nurturing. "Every time people ask me how many children I have, I usually answer that I have three of my own and 15 others whom we have adopted," says Dominguez. The students rise at 6 a.m., walk 20-30 minutes to school, return in the afternoon for a big lunch, do homework, help clean the facilities and tend the greenhouse. "The garden helps cut the costs because when you have that many teenagers, the food goes fast!" laughs Dominguez. MIUC also brings in artisans to teach trades to the students to provide them with additional income. During moments

of free time the students play soccer or basketball. Evenings include a brief reflection and prayer time.

Mealtime is Dominguez's favorite time of the day because that is when he finds out what is going on in the student's lives. He particularly loves nurturing their faith life. "Education without the gospel is valuable," he says, "but education with the gospel is complete because it teaches us to love others and not just ourselves. I tell our students that when I finished the university I saw my education not as a trophy to be set upon the shelf and admired by myself, but as a tool that God provided for me to be used to serve others."

Dominguez is constantly frustrated by a lack of resources to adequately meet the needs of many of the students who come. "At MIUC we provide room and board for the students, but this is not always enough," he says. "Since our student's families are extremely poor, they often have no other source of help to pay for school, and many give up during the first half-year of classes." MIUC usually starts the year with 15 students and finishes with 8 or 9, the majority leaving for economic reasons. "Every time a student drops out of school my heart cries, because there is

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FAREWELL, from page 1

more broadly from the seminary population. There is a spirit of openness and welcome that wasn't as obvious before.

Her connection with area congregations grew as her family did. During her time at Luther Seminary, she has gotten married – to Neeraj Ekka, a Luther Seminary alum and GMI student worker – and become a mother. The Ekka's children – Maani, 5, Urbas, 3, and Puna, 1 – have been ambassadors for the GMI in their own right, charming congregations and entertaining at GMI gatherings.

"Our children have helped us see God's mission in a real sense," she said. "They have grown up on this campus."

Saying goodbye after eleven years has been difficult. A few weeks ago, the family had their farewell at Christ Lutheran Church in Blaine, one of two (with Woodlake Lutheran Church in Richfield) congregations that has served as their home church. "It was a wet, wet weekend," she said. "We have so many friends here. The church has been so good to us."

Still, she is excited about what the future holds. The mission field in India is tremendous, she said. Their home church, the North West Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church (NWGELC), has only 70 pastors serving more than 700 congregations. There is no formal training center to equip the evangelists, pastors and lay leaders needed to serve and help the church grow. Nijhar and Neeraj have been called back to India to build such a center – starting from the ground up. "There are five acres of land waiting for us when we return," she said. "We will be doing everything from creating the

building to designing the curriculum."

She sees the center as vitally important to the NWGELC for two reasons: finances, and culture. "It is very expensive to send students to other places for training, so having a local center will mean many more people can participate," she said. "And, even if they are able to go away to study, India is so big and so culturally and theologically diverse, that what they learn doesn't translate well in our community."

Though the Ekkas will be serving as associate missionaries through the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL), they recognize that the project will take much more in terms of financial and prayer support. They have already secured partnerships with a half-dozen American churches, and have laid the groundwork for additional congregations to be involved. In addition, in January, a group of Luther Seminary students will travel to India to assist as part of their cross-cultural mission course requirement. They will visit area churches to study the ministries in action.

Though she admits to being a little nervous about what lies ahead, she trusts in the promise her parents shared with her more than a decade ago: that in her core, she is a missionary.

"That is my prayer, and is going to be my prayer until I die, that sharing the good news of Jesus Christ should be the focus of mission."

DOMINGUEZ, from page 4

one young life that will not receive an education and will be swallowed up in the cycle of poverty," laments Dominguez.

In 1999, Dominguez began to feel God's call to further educate himself. Nothing happened for several years until the call suddenly crystallized with a scholarship offer from Luther Seminary. Calvary Lutheran Church also offered to support the family while in America and leadership became available at MIUC to free the Dominguez family to spend two years abroad. In the fall of 2003, Dominguez began studies in the Master of Arts New Testament program at Luther Seminary.

"I have had a great experience at Luther," Dominguez says brightly. "To sit down with the professors and absorb the experiences and knowledge they have accumulated over the years has helped me to better clarify the faith that I hold. I feel like I have climbed a mountain with these professors and now I can see farther out; I have seen the rivers and villages far below with greater perspective. Now I can come down again to the valley and be with my people and share the good news of Christ with them."

The Dominguez family returned home to Mexico this summer to resume their mission work. In addition, Dominguez will begin teaching lay leaders how to do home bible studies at the Mazahua Valley Bible Institute. "This is very important in Mexican culture because the spread of the gospel is spontaneous there," explains Dominguez. "It happens when you meet people on the street, perhaps for lunch, and someone might ask if you can come to their home and teach them about the Bible. ICI uses no paid pastors, so trained lay leaders who have day jobs are vital."

Dominguez hopes that the spread of the gospel by these trained lay leaders will help awaken and release the Mexican people from some of the burdens of poverty they currently face. He also hopes that when travelers come to Mexico and see a small child in the pit of poverty, they will always remember that, with a little help, it is not impossible to get out of the cycle. "I was once a child like that," Dominguez emphasizes, "and God lifted me up and brought me to being able to serve!"

– HK

For more information about the Dominguez's mission work at the Mexican Indigenous University Center, visit www.miuc.org

GMI Member Profile

Gordon & Betty Lundberg

No one would guess that in a quaint house in North St. Paul there are walls covered with dark wooden masks from New Zealand and Africa, while shelves hold intricate Chinese carvings, a little Norwegian troll, and Scandinavian horses. These are just a few of the treasured items in Gordon and Betty Lundberg's household. Their travels have taken them around the world where they could see ministry in the works.

The Lundbergs share fifty-eight years of fond memories and a life of ministry that started one rainy day when they went to Como Lake and rented a water bike. "Since it was raining we could go around again for the same price: 35 cents," Gordon said smiling. Ever since that first date their adventures got more exotic and just as memorable.

Gordon was a florist for forty-three years and Betty worked as a secretary with the North St. Paul school district. They raised two boys, have five grandchildren, and dedicated their lives to their family and the church. They attend St. Mark's Lutheran Church, where they were involved for many years with the Mission Committee, Stewardship Committee, and the Gift and Memorial Committee. The couple also enjoyed traveling around the Midwest attending Global Mission Events and Global Health Ministry conferences.

"Every two years we'd have a mission festival at church and students from the Seminary would come," Betty said. "We'd have flags from around the world. Each circle would take a country, prepare a snack and learn as much as they could about their culture." The Lundbergs started inviting students over for dinner, all the while creating treasured memories and funny stories. Betty and Gordon laughed as they talked about one such story: "One girl came over to help us make a type of candy. She wanted 2lbs. of sugar, and 1lb. of butter. It was kind of like molasses candy. It was supposed to spread out thin, but it was thick," Betty said laughing. "I could hear them breaking something and I walked into the kitchen and chunks were flying all over," Gordon added.

A friend, Dr. Duain Vierow, a former missionary and one of the originators of the GMI, asked them to help raise money for the newly-formed GMI. This was the beginning of their relationship with International Students. "For years we helped put the packets together for the spring Annual Lutheran Mission Conference," Gordon said. They also went on six mission trips, and became the host family for current



Betty and Gordon Lundberg's home is filled with treasures they have collected on their travels around the world.

Ph.D. student Thomas Tsen, M.A. student Laura Hindrianto, and their family. "It's fun to meet these kids from all over the world," Gordon said.

These days Gordon and Betty say they have slowed down. They do not travel as much, but their love for it will never cease. They are still involved with GMI and go to international student events and potlucks on Luther's campus. And, they continue to contribute to GMI annually and have even included GMI in their estate plans.

GMI is important to Gordon and Betty for many reasons. "We've seen so many of the international students grow and then go home," Betty said. Those students left an impression on the Lundberg's hearts and they are missed. "They are all things that are shall always be remembered," Gordon said. They also commentated on how important it is to learn about another's way of life. "You can take all the experiences you've had, and show people pictures, tell them stories, but you can't get it across. People need to experience it themselves."

– KL

The GMI is supported by generous gifts from donors like the Lundbergs. If you would like to contribute, or for more information, contact CloEve Demmer at 651-641-3594 or cdemmer@luthersem.edu

✘ STUDENTS GO FORTH TO STUDY

Luther Seminary students will study in various cross-cultural settings in the U.S. as well as Guatemala, Mexico, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, India and South Africa this January. The GMI supports these students in this important aspect of their education both through monetary funding as well as through orientation and debriefing sessions.



✘ LOOKING FOR INFORMATION?

New mission resources are often made available through the ELCA Division for Global Mission and through the Global Mission Institute. To find out more about resources available to your congregation, go to www.elca.org/globalmission or www.luthersem.edu/gmi You may also call the GMI at 651-641-3390.

✘ LS STUDENT SHARES RAMADAN EXPERIENCE

Islamic Studies student Yasir Bilgin and the local Turkish community here in the Twin Cities hosted two Iftar meals for Luther Seminary students, faculty and staff during October. Iftar is the evening meal which breaks the daily fast during the Muslim observance of Ramadan. Students, faculty and staff were invited to eat this special meal and learn more about the practice of Islam as well as Turkish culture.

✘ KRISTIE HENNIG ORDIANED

Former GMI Program Coordinator Kristie Hennig was ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament on Oct. 9, 2005, at Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. She is now serving as associate pastor of outreach and inreach at Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Chanhassen, Minn. Congratulations, Kristie!

YES!
I want to help others share the Gospel around the world.

Thank you for considering a gift to the GMI. Your gift to the GMI helps give international church leaders the opportunity to advance their ministry through study at Luther Seminary.

Why is your support of the GMI important?

The work of the GMI is supported entirely by the gifts and grants of individuals, congregations, foundations and corporations.

How can you become a member?

Membership begins with a gift of \$250 to the GMI. Membership may be renewed annually. GMI membership automatically qualifies you as a PARTNER of Luther Seminary.

Benefits of Membership

1. The satisfaction of knowing your investment strengthens global mission in the ELCA and around the world.
2. Prompt thanks and recognition from the GMI and Luther Seminary.
3. Automatic membership into Luther Seminary PARTNERS.
4. An annual GMI Watanabe Calendar (mailed late fall)
5. Invitation to an annual GMI donor recognition event.
6. *Global Vision* newsletter, featuring news and information about global mission.

Global Mission Membership Levels

- GMI Missioner (\$10,000 or more)
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Have you included the GMI in your estate plans?

By including the GMI in your estate plans, you will help share the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world. For more information on various planning options, please check here.



GMI Calendar

Mission & Ministry Forums

Most Thursdays. Topics vary. Bring a lunch. Olson Campus Center; check at main desk for location. 12:30-1:30 p.m. Call 651-641-3390 for schedule or more information.

November 29-December 1, 2005 Fair Trade Fair

Handcrafted gifts from around the world. Olson Campus Center Commons. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

February 9, 2006 Dr. Monica Melanchthon Preaches in Chapel

Chapel of the Incarnation. 10 a.m.

March 25, 2006 Annual Lutheran Mission Conference

"Mission: Text and Context," with keynote speaker Monica Melanchthon presenting on "Seeking Justice, Peace and Reconciliation: In the Way of Christ for the Sake of the World." Lively worship, networking, workshops, resources. Luther Seminary. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.



Prayer Concerns

- ✘ We offer prayers of support to former GMI Director Duane Olson and his family on the death of his wife, Arda, on Oct. 19, and give thanks for her life among us.
- ✘ Prayers are lifted up for all those who suffer from the recent natural disasters in the United States, India, Pakistan, and Guatemala. May hope and peace come to those who live in uncertainty and despair, through the Holy Spirit as well as through the care and gifts of others.
- ✘ We express our thankfulness to God as we enter the holiday season. May the abundance of grace, hope, forgiveness, love and faith that God gives inspire us to share these gifts with others.
- ✘ As Neeraj, Nijhar, Maani, Urbas and Puna Ekka return to India, we pray for safety in travel, transition and in the ministry ahead of them.
- ✘ For all the students preparing for January term cross-cultural experiences, we pray for patience, understanding and new insights about God's work in our world.

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Vol. 15, No. 3, Pentecost 2005

Global Mission Institute

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Global Vision is published and distributed via third class mail by the Global Mission Institute, Luther Seminary, 2481 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. e-mail: gmi@luthersem.edu

Global Vision

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