

# CONNECTIONS online

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TERESA COTRIM, PIXABAY



## Why Mission?

Essay by Rev. Dr. Amy Little



Mark Twain wrote: “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

The same could be said about mission and mission trips. Whether to help clean up after a natural disaster or to a foreign country to bring much-needed aid, those who venture out in mission in the name of Christ shall be greatly impacted by what they see and who they meet.

My first mission trip overseas was in 2014 to the small African country of Malawi. I had no expectations and a lot of curiosity. I thought I was going to share my gifts and be of service to my brothers and sisters in Christ, and I was, but something else happened that was far greater than anything I could have imagined.

The group I was with was well known by this time to the people in Kanyenyeva, Malawi. They valued the relationship forged over yearly visits. The mission leaders asked, “Would you prefer we send the money we would spend on travel instead of coming to visit next year?” and the reply was always, “We want you to come back!” The relationship meant more than the money. And so we went back, again and again, to see our friends and continue to support, teach, learn, and grow in faith together. Each time, someone would inevitably say, “You came back!” The language we spoke didn’t matter. The color of our skin didn’t matter. Our unity in Christ Jesus mattered. The love we share for one another is the love of Christ, and we carry other in our hearts even if we are far apart.

I write these words to encourage you to step out in faith and go on a mission trip. You will be changed for the good. As you ponder the idea, there are a few things to keep in mind. A mission trip is not a vacation. The people you will meet and work alongside will probably have

more to teach you than you do them. They are not objects to act upon; they are brothers and sisters, and they will teach you if you are willing to learn about their way of life and about their faith. They will love you, and you will fall for them and hold them in your heart forever.

These trips take great preparation. Cultural awareness is a key matter. We go with humility, not arrogance — and this is more difficult than you might think! You may see a better way to do something, but it can be disrespectful to offer a different way to a person in their own homeland. Observation is your job! Learn about customs and manners in your host’s culture. Take time to learn as much as you can about your host’s culture before you arrive, so that you don’t get there and do something to dishonor someone. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about your new experiences. It shows your interest.

I have often heard this question from well-meaning people: “Why are you going to (fill in the blank) when we have starving children and people in need right here?” It’s a good question. The answer comes from Acts of the Apostles. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he instructed his disciples to continue to serve: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8). Jerusalem represents your hometown, Judea is your country, Samaria is outside the boundaries of your homeland, and to the ends of the earth is far away from home. So you see, God calls us to serve close to home and far away!

I pray you will be inspired to step out of your comfort zone and experience the love of God in a new way. You will be blessed, and so will those whom you meet. 

**Amy Little** of Norwalk, Ohio, and Arlington, Texas, is the general secretary and chief operating officer of the North American Lutheran Church.

# Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



## PSALM 5:9-12

For there is no truth  
in their mouth;  
their inmost self is  
destruction;

**their throat is an open  
grave; they flatter  
with their tongue.**

Make them bear their  
guilt, O God; let them  
fall by their own  
counsels;

because of the  
abundance of their  
transgressions cast  
them out, for they have  
rebelled against you.

But let all who take refuge  
in you rejoice; let them  
ever sing for joy,  
and spread your  
protection over them,  
that those who love  
your name may exult  
in you.

For you bless the  
righteous, O Lord; you  
cover him with favor  
as with a shield.

The words of King David in the ninth verse of Psalm 5, as he rages against the attacks of his enemies, will be echoed centuries later by the apostle Paul in Romans 3. As the church struggles with what it means for Jewish and Gentile Christians to gather alongside one another, Paul rebukes any sense of superiority that one group may feel using a laundry list of verses from the Psalms, Proverbs, and prophets. Sin, Paul and David remind us, has permeated the world. It is inescapable, and it is often found in the places closest to us: our friends, our family, our church, and our own treacherous hearts.

But while this Psalm may hold up a mirror to our brokenness, its primary purpose is to offer praise to the God that delivers us from this pain. Again and again, David prays of the Lord's righteousness, knowing that he would find very little righteousness in the mirror. Again and again, David entreats the Lord for justice, trusting in God's wisdom over his own. Again and again, David gives thanks for the Lord's refuge, knowing that God will shelter those who trust in him.

Our Psalm ends, in the middle of this Easter season, with shouts of joy that the same God who spreads his arms wide on the cross for the sake of you and me, has spread his arms to offer protection for the generations that came before us and the generations that will follow, and spreads them now to welcome us into his kingdom of grace.

Read the Psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for your own personal devotions or in a short Bible study session with group discussion.

1. Read Romans 3, paying special attention to the context around v. 13. Why do you think Paul cites Psalm 5? How is this both a reminder of God's law and the hope of the Gospel?

2. David describes his enemies, saying, "their throat is an empty grave" (v. 9). How can words put people to death? What does this mean for the church?

3. David, himself imperfect, prays for God's judgement on those who have fallen short. How is God's judgement different than our own? What frightens you about God's judgement? What gives you hope?

4. David and Paul are two troubled men separated by centuries using the same language to describe the works of man and the salvation of God. How does it give you hope to know scripture endures for centuries? What hope does it give the church?

**We pray:** O Lord, you are a just God who does not allow us to hide behind our self righteousness, but you have not cast us into condemnation. You have sent us your Son, so we may receive our salvation under the shield of his righteousness. We rejoice as we take refuge in your grace. Amen. 

The author of this installment, **Rev. Taylor Rister-Stempniak** of Fresno, California, is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in the community of Easton.

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# Spiritual Orphans Network



Ministry Partner Focus by David Briedenbach

**SEND HOPE.  
SEND LOVE.  
SEND ONE.**

**SEND ONE SHORT-TERM MISSIONARY**

Teaching, mentoring, and walking alongside students, bringing hope and connection to the global family of Christ.

**SEND ONE CAMPER**

Young hearts are transformed when they hear the Gospel, build lasting relationships, and grow in faith through SON English Bible Camps or SON Teen Life & Adventure Retreats.

**SEND ONE STUDENT**

Young people who are living in war-torn countries, or aren't culturally supported in pursuing higher education, can come to the U.S. through SON to receive a Christ-centered education.

Spiritual Orphans Network has placed career missionaries and global workers in former communist and Soviet bloc nations, including Poland, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, Albania, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia. We also strive to equip our international ministry partners to serve as indigenous workers within their own cultures.

SON believes the best full-time missionaries are those who natively speak the local language and truly understand the culture in which they are serving as they live there. Each summer, short-term mission teams are sent by SON to serve alongside these full-time missionaries and global workers.

However, SON does more than just send short-term mission teams to co-host English Bible Camps and Retreats. At the core of ministry is building relationships — engaging hearts, reclaiming hope, and transforming lives — and that mission happens because people like you choose to stand with SON. Nurturing global workers by equipping and mentoring through seminars, seminary support, evangelism, and prayer are just a few ways this is accomplished.

You don't have to go overseas to be part of the mission! You can be a sender. A prayer warrior. A kingdom builder. What is God calling you to?

**IT ONLY TAKES ONE.** One to be called and



**SPIRITUAL ORPHANS NETWORK**

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

*John 17:17-18*

one to be sent. One SON English Bible Camp or Teen Life & Adventure Retreat to make a lasting impression on one camper. One summer to share the love of Jesus with children of God who don't yet know they have a Father in Heaven who loves them. One student who seeks the opportunity that does not exist in his or her own country to learn and to grow so they return to their country, ready to serve, teach, lead, and love with the heart of Jesus.

Connect with SON and help SEND ONE. Reach out to [Angela@SONetwork.org](mailto:Angela@SONetwork.org) or visit [SONetwork.org](http://SONetwork.org) to learn more. 

**David Briedenbach** of Albuquerque is a dual-rostered LCMC / NALC pastor and has served as executive director of Spiritual Orphans Network since 2015.

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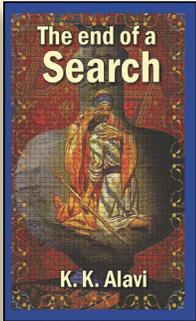
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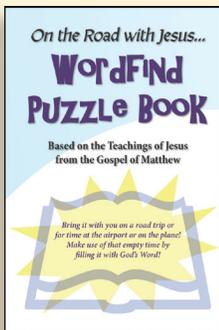


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## SALVATION STORY

**The End of a Search** author K.K. Alavi tells his story of struggles and persecutions in India as he was led from his Muslim background to embrace the grace of Jesus. Softcover, 52 pages, from New Hope Mission Society. [Item B-A400, \\$5.99, solapublishing.com](#)



## SUMMER TRAVEL

If you've got a long car ride or airport layover ahead, *On the Road With Jesus* is there for you with 16 word searches and 11 word scrambles created by Mark Ryman from texts from the Gospel of Matthew. [Item D-3010, \\$3, solapublishing.com](#)

## THIS MONTH'S UNEXPECTEDLY AWESOME RESOURCE

Download several liturgical worship resources under the Home menu at [solapublishing.com](http://solapublishing.com). These products are free and reproducible for congregational use.

Among the offerings are current and past liturgical calendars, in color and black and white, based on the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod version of the Revised Common Lectionary (used by permission). Congregations who would like to purchase printed copies may do so as well, using a link on the page. This calendar is the base for products in Sola's SOWeR worship resource site.

Two worship settings are available: The Sola Scriptura Setting, a spoken liturgy for Holy Communion using Scripture verses, and the Holy

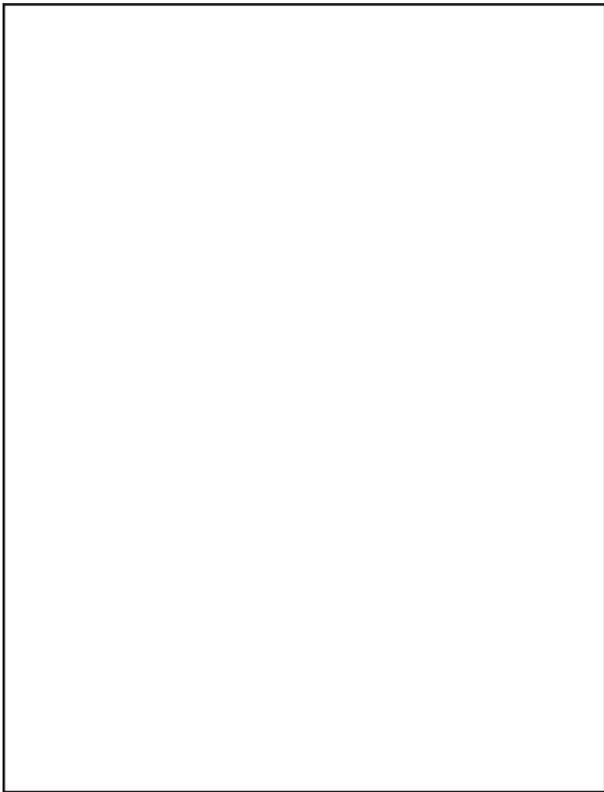


Trinity Setting, a revised version of the 1917 Common Service suitable for churches accustomed to a formal liturgical tradition.

The page also has more to share, including a Passion narrative based on Mark and a number of lectionary resource links. 

## ... AND A GAME

Playing in print? Try your hand at drawing a lamb with this tutorial inspired by artist Ed Emberley. Reading Connections Online though your browser? Try this [jigsaw puzzle](#) from Rev. Mark Ryman.



1. Draw an ellipse
2. Add three half ellipses
3. Add a triangle with rounded corners
4. Add two curves
5. Add two more curves
6. Add some woolly curls