



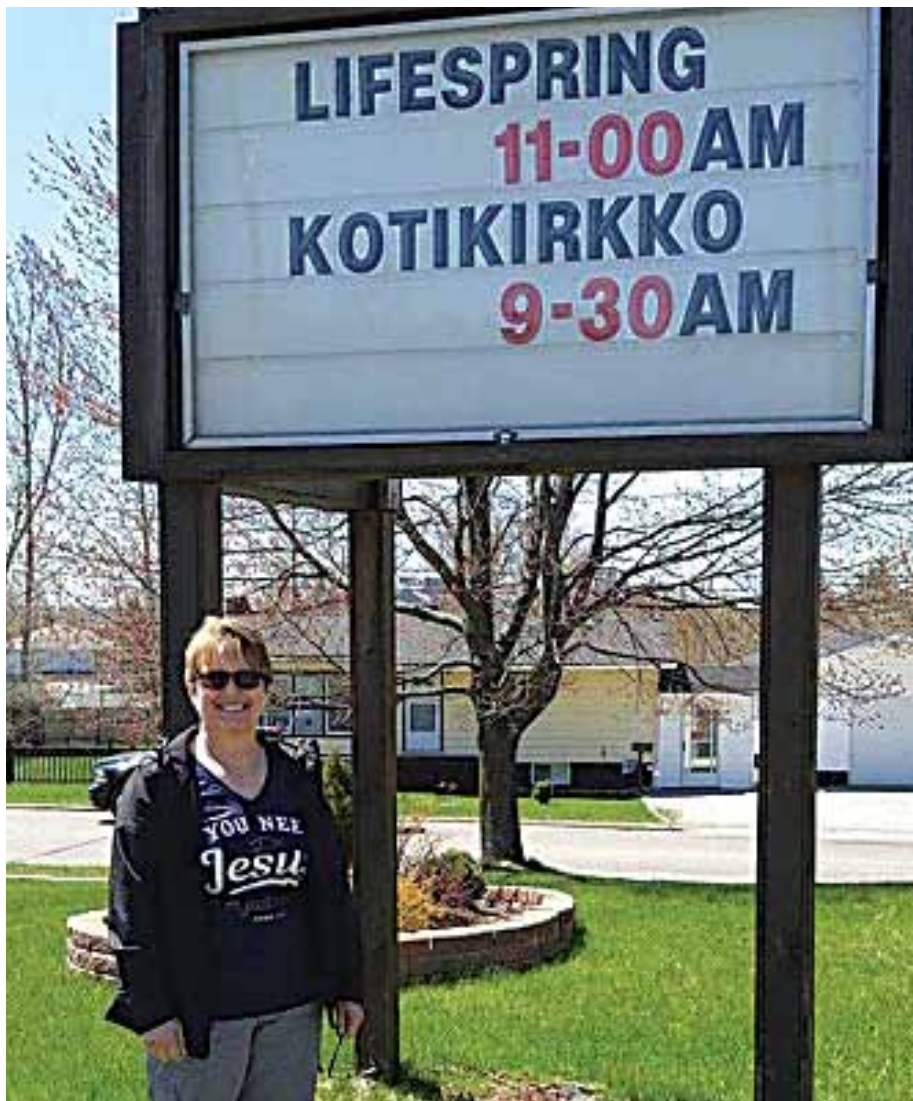
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Special Edition

COMPLIMENTARY ISSUE



You are about to read a riveting testimony of Mailis Lindback Lewis. She told her story at Lifespring Church in Sault Ste. Marie on Feb. 19, 2017. She tells how her heavenly Father pursued her relentlessly because of His unconditional love for her. Mailis has taken on the position of spokesperson for this Todistaja publication for the Sault Ste. Marie area. May the Lord bless you in this new area of service!

"My Pastor, Rudy Hyvärinen recently asked me if I would share my testimony at a Sunday service. I looked right at him and said, "No, that's ok, thanks." Pastor Rudy looked right back at me and asked, "Are you that bashful?" "Yes," I said without hesitation. Then he asked if I would pray about it. That I could agree to. The next Sunday I shared my testimony with the congregation.

Since coming back to the Lord a little over a year ago, it was an all or

nothing, live or die commitment to Him. No matter how difficult, or how uncomfortable it was, I would obey the Lord. "Your will be done – whatever you ask I will do," I prayed. I wrestled with my flesh and the enemy because I knew that he didn't want me to obey the Lord. The enemy knows that obedience makes us stronger. Obviously, in the end, I did obey, since I am giving my testimony.

This is not my comfort zone, as I prefer to be in the background. I also know that I am accountable for every spoken word, so I prayed and also asked a few prayer warriors to pray for wisdom, that I would only speak what the Holy Spirit wants me to speak. In Malachi 3:16 it says that spoken words are recorded in the book of remembrance.

I asked the Lord to make me so sensitive that if any of my words, thoughts, or actions are out of line, He would convict me immediately so that I can ask forgiveness and make amends if needed. I don't want to give Satan any

more ammunition than he already has. Being obedient to the Lord takes away the enemy's power and strengthens us. I am working on this daily. When we are disobedient, we leave the window cracked open and the enemy can come in and wreak havoc in our lives and in the lives of others as well. In 1 Peter 5:8, it says that Satan is a roaring lion looking to devour you.

My Mom (Äiti) always use to tell me, "Maija, always be careful to not give the devil your baby finger because he will take your whole hand!" I would always say, "Yeah, yeah," but what she said was true. He is subtle, flying under the radar, luring, enticing, and tempting us with anything and everything to cause us to stray. Fun things, beautiful things, places, and good times, things that may not be bad in themselves, can take your eyes off the Lord.

Before you know it, years have passed by and your walk is non-existent or at a stand still. I speak from experience. I often thought, "I got this" or "I won't get caught up that" or "That's never going to happen to me." Then BAM! Suddenly, you're in sin right up to your eyeballs. Then you start justifying your actions, twisting scripture to suit your needs and making excuses. It doesn't happen overnight; it's gradual. For me it started by missing the odd service here and there. My prayer times got shorter and shorter. I got busier and busier. Time in the Word became less and less and then non-existent.

The world looked great. Right was wrong and wrong was right. I will not get into the sinful details of my backsliding life, but we all know that a sin is a sin from a little white lie to murder and everything else in between. I want my testimony to be about the power of God, the joy of the Lord and the protection of the Holy Spirit. Another thing that my Mom would say to me was, "Maija, you can't get into heaven hanging onto my skirt hem, you have to be right with Jesus on your own. No one can get you in but Jesus." (John

3:16) Then she would preach at me and again and I would say, "Yeah, yeah." Then she added, "The Holy Spirit will only come knocking so many times and if you don't open the door, He will go past." Again the reply was, "Yeah, yeah."

A few decades later, I realized that the Holy Spirit was not going to come knocking again. It was up to me to seek Him now. The Holy Spirit is a Gentleman. He will not push Himself on anyone, but He patiently watched and protected. He waited for me. I was humiliated, broken, ashamed, and sinful. I was so lost that I had to look up to see the bottom! I needed my Saviour. So, face down, with nothing to offer but my life, I handed it to Him. As I cried out and asked forgiveness, I immediately felt that He loved me and had forgiven me, removing all guilt, and shame, filling me with joy and the peace that passes all understanding.

After coming back to the Lord, I knew that I needed to get into a church. I prayed that the Lord would lead me to where He wanted me to be. First, I went to a church where I knew a few people. Then, I went to the Clock's church in Goulais Bay a few times because that is the church where I grew up. Then, Margit my friend invited me to Lifespring Church one Sunday morning. When I walked in, it was like I was coming home, like the prodigal son. I could hear the Lord saying, "Welcome home." I knew this was where He wanted me to be. This church now feels like my safe haven. It reminds me of Noah's ark, our safety from the storms and protection from the elements, our sanctuary.

A promise in Deuteronomy 31:6 says that He will never leave or forsake us. The Lord is watching over our loved ones and friends that are not saved. Keep praying, because there is power in prayer! Amen!

Mailis Lindback Lewis

Coming Home!

The Doll

When I first saw her last summer, I thought she was lovely. It was a beautiful sunny day in Helsinki, and the harbor market was full of people. I noticed her as I walked by one of the tables. She had two beautiful blonde braids, rosy cheeks, a rosebud mouth, and a pretty blue dress, made in a traditional Finnish folk style. She was also 18 inches tall.

Now, I have always been a bit of a doll collector, but this one almost seemed to be calling my name. When I asked the price, I found out that she was a little more expensive than I anticipated, and decided that I could not justify putting out that kind of money for a doll, and I left her. The next day I was back at the market, this time with my brother, and stopped to see if she was still there. She was. But again I left her, still unable to bring myself to spend the money.



Anita Kuperinen (6 1/2 years) and her brother Tom Kuperinen (5 years)

I later realized that I did not have room in my luggage anyway, so there she stayed. Even after I came back home, every once in a while I would remember that doll, and think that perhaps next time I went to Finland, I would get one from the lady in the market who made them.

Then came Christmas Eve. I was at my brother's place and we were having a wonderful time opening gifts, playing some games, and enjoying some dessert and coffee. As the gifts were being passed out, I was handed a strangely shaped package. I had no idea what it could be, but kept stealing glances at it as the others were opening their gifts. I tried to guess what might be inside the festive wrapping paper, but could think of nothing. Then it was my turn. I tore off the wrapping, revealing a small face – a face with rosy cheeks, and a rosebud mouth, framed by two blonde braids. It was the doll that I had so admired that summer. My brother had gone back and bought her the day after we had been at the Helsinki market together.

Even as I write this, she is standing on a table nearby, and I see her. To me, she is a reminder of what a wonderful family I have, and of my Finnish heritage. She is also a reminder that God sees our hearts, and knows our desires – even the little ones we think are insignificant – and he delights in giving them to us. The same way we love seeing our loved one's reactions to a gift that we know they really want, God loves seeing our reactions to the things He gives us that He knows we long for. When I look to-



ward that table, I don't just see a doll. I see an example of God's faithfulness, love and grace toward us.

*"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."
Psalm 37:4*

Anita Kuperinen

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



The long awaited summer has finally arrived to which we say an eager, "Welcome!" For some, it has been a longer wait than for others. As we have different seasons in nature, we also have different seasons in our lives. In every season there is something new to learn and experience. God always

wants to teach us more about who He is. I know you will find Him in every article or poem you are about to read.

On the front page you will meet Mailis Lindback Lewis, a very special friend of mine. We go back a long way and I can't even begin to describe how happy I am she has found her way back to the Lord. The theme of her testimony is: "God never gives up on us! Anita Kuperinen reminds us about how God loves to

give us the desires of our hearts. Anita lives in Toronto, Ontario.

Sherrill Whittern, writes about "Our Mentor" who is the Holy Spirit. If you have questions about who the Holy Spirit is, make sure you read this enlightening article. Sherrill lives in Adrian, Michigan.

Erika Caron, who lives in Sudbury Ontario, takes us on an adventure to Cuba. I am sure you will enjoy the experience with her from a different perspective.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to all the writers for sharing their inspiring stories. They remind us that God is a faithful and loving God. May the Lord bless you as you read these stories.

Have a wonderful summer and remember that God is truly on the throne! Most of all, He wants to be on the throne of your life. He loves you more than you can imagine and has a good plan for your life. Just open your heart to Him! Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Outi

HE CARES

He sees the sparrow falling down,
clothes the lily in her rich, white gown.
How much more then does He see,
what happens to you and me?
He knows each hair upon our head.
He watches while we sleep in bed.
He holds our hand when we're afraid.
He leads us when we lose our way.
He wraps His arms 'round when we're cold.
He knows what the future holds.
Rejoice and be glad!
Let not your heart be sad!
He's the Good Shepherd, and
we're His sheep.
He's in the high hills, and valleys deep.
He will not leave us all alone,
and one day He will call us Home!

Anita Kuperinen



Veradero's beautiful beach

We traveled as a family to Cuba, to see the work my mother passionately talked about, and to meet the Christian friends she holds so close to her heart. She has been to Cuba every year for twenty years now. A group goes from the Finnish and English churches annually.

All three of our daughters got the opportunity to meet the people and see the churches that they have. Since my childhood, I helped my mother shop, pack and check the weight of her suitcases before leaving. Then, I would listen to stories, read emails and look at pictures when she got home.

We arrived to beautiful sunshine and one of the most gorgeous beaches in the world. It was a vacation in part, and an opportunity to visit three churches: The first church was a two-hour drive past San Francisco. It is a country village, re-



Pastor Heisi and his family in San Francisco Church



Matanza Bethel Church which has grown from 50 to 1000 members in 20 years.

San Francisco church service

a very crowded kitchen. Our interpreter, Derek, says the pastor is blessed to have us there and they keep us in their prayers daily. They also ask that we remember them in prayer.

Apparently, the “neighborhood watch” has been trying to report the church to the Cuban authorities, and they ask that we pray that this persecution will stop. After our meal, the church fills up. It is late at night and very dark. This is the safest time for us to visit without the attention daylight brings to travelers. The church can only hold about 30 but 80 people in total gather even in the streets just to listen to the message and music. The children are excited and they are dressed in their best. They run up to do a tambourine dance and song. The room is filled with joy and rejoicing even with the language barrier. No words need to be spoken to share our happiness and love for one another. We find out that flashlights and medication are needed in this area. They are far from the main city

Continued on back page

mote and extremely poor. San Francisco is the sister church to the Sudbury Finnish Church. It captured all our hearts and moves us to tears when we remember it. Pastor Heisi, his wife and two year old son greeted all eight of us. They brought us into a small concrete church with a few well-worn pews and a tiny parsonage in the back. They were very excited to have us and had prepared a traditional Cuban meal for us. This is their way of

thanking and welcoming us.

It is hard to imagine all the effort that goes into the meal they prepared for us. Cutlery and dishes have to be gathered from the church family and members cook a dish that they bring to the church ahead of time to serve to us when we arrive. This is the best meal we will eat in Cuba since they are experts at adding love to everything. But, it is hard to swallow, knowing this meal is more than they themselves have. We eat and share in

**CANADA
- QUEBEC, ONTARIO,
NEW BRUNSWICK &
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Pray for the people impacted by flooding that has occurred in several provinces, including Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia, over the past week. Some municipalities have declared states of emergency and ordered homeowners to leave their properties. Pray that the waters will recede so no further damage can be done. Pray that God will strengthen people in the affected areas as they work to stop the flooding from their homes and businesses, and will help rescuers to locate missing persons. Pray also that many people will have opportunities to hear and receive the gospel in the aftermath of these events.

NIGERIA

Praise God for the release of 82 schoolgirls in exchange for the Nigerian government's release of several prisoners. The girls were originally kidnapped in April 2014 by extremists. Pray that God will open the way for the girls and their families to be cared for and healed spiritually and emotionally. Pray for the speedy and safe return of the 113 girls who remain unaccounted for.

PAOC Missions Hotline

Our Mentor



A slight grimace announced her pain with every movement, but still, light sparkled from her eyes. Although she could not verbally express her thoughts, her smile beamed joy. How can joy coexist with painful suffering?

The Holy Spirit produces a joy that shines through pain. When Jesus told his followers He would soon be killed, rise again, and leave them for a time, He also promised, *"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever... and (He) shall be in you."* (John 14:16-17) This Greek word "Parakletos," translated both "Comforter" and "Helper" denotes an intercessor, a counselor and a mentor sent alongside to help someone.

Just as Jesus walked alongside his disciples, teaching and training them, so the Holy Spirit accompanies Christ's followers to mentor them as He takes up residence within them. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:26 what the Holy Spirit would do. *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

The Holy Spirit gives wisdom to guide us in what we should say and do. We are not left to live the Christian life in our own

power. The indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to live in a way that pleases our Lord in whatever situations life brings.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22) This Greek word "karpos" means literal fruit. Just as a tree produces fruit, so the Holy Spirit produces these qualities in Christian lives, transforming a person from the inside out. He gives the ability to genuinely love the unlovable. He bestows joy amid pain and sorrow. He provides peace during turmoil. He grants patient endurance to carry us through hard times. He develops the kindness of a gentle spirit. And he grows our faith, producing faithfulness.

This reminds me of another nursing home resident. She's a hospice patient. One evening she said, "My doctor told me I would probably die soon in one of two ways. Suddenly, I might find it impossible to breathe. Or, maybe I will go to sleep one night and wake up in Heaven. I hope it's the latter because I often imagine the joy of gazing into the face of Jesus." This resident now rarely leaves her room, but friends visit regularly. I understand why. Love and kindness radiate in everything she says and does, along with patience, gratitude and thanksgiving...the fruits of



the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does many things. He gives many gifts to the Church. But one of His most precious gifts is His indwelling presence, which gives us the wisdom and power we need to live victoriously for Christ even when we are surrounded by a fallen world.

Sherrill Whittern

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CUBA

and if a child gets a fever, it could be costly. Hydro is not available to everyone and the darkness makes it hard to get around at night.

A few days later Pastor Derek picks us up to go to Matanzas Church. He is married to the Matanzas head pastor's daughter. He is also the head Youth Minister for all of that area in Cuba. He has a vehicle that allows him to enter the resort area to take us to church. He came to Alberta for a year and learned to speak English. He is our driver and interpreter for the whole time we are in Cuba. When he was studying in Canada, he worked and

made enough money to buy a plot of land that he farms to help the church in Citras. He tells us he just bought fruit trees that will bear fruit in five years. All the profits from the sale of the produce will go to missions and to support the church.

I am excited to see the Matanzas Church, which had 50 members when I visited 24 years ago. Now it has over 1000 members. It is a huge concrete, three-story building that has a youth group and Sunday school. They send missionaries around the world and take part in a program called the "Manna Box". This has helped them plant churches around Cuba because they are the first responders in a natural disaster. When they bring help, they can also build relationships and share the gospel. In Matanzas, we have dinner and visit with many pastors' families. We are all blessed to have had the opportunity to spend the whole day getting to know them.

The late Erkki Inkiläinen was a huge support of the work in Cuba. With him gone, we pray that people will continue to be drawn to go to Cuba, to offer support and encouragement to the Cuban people. We pray that work that has been set in motion will continue for many more years.

I hope that, as you read this article, you will be drawn to pray for the Cuban people who live under communist rule and are persecuted for their faith. I pray that they will be given freedom from the oppressive rules they live under. I pray that you will be drawn to help in any way God places on your heart.

Erika Caron



Take Hold of Eternal Life

This column provides a brief overview of God's plan of salvation, and tells you how to be a child of God.

1. Every human being is a sinner. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Sin condemns a person to eternal punishment.

2. God loves you. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

3. Jesus is the only savior. *"Neither is there salvation in any other, it has no other name under heaven by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

4. You need to repent of your sins, ask forgiveness and believe in Jesus' atoning work on the cross, and personally accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. *When you receive Jesus, you become a child of God. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12). This is called new birth. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God* (John 3:3).

5. Pray like this: *The Lord Jesus, I understand that I am a sinner, and I believe that You died on the cross for me. I would now like to open the door to my heart and accept you as my Savior and Lord. You control everything from now on and help me to live according to Thy will.*

If you prayed that prayer with a sincere heart, you are now a child of God, saved, and on your way to eternal life.