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TODISTAJA  
SPECIAL EDITION

A joint publication of the  
Finnish Pentecostal Churches  
in Canada and in  
the United States of America.  
Published 10 times a year.

*Publisher***MISSION PRESS SOCIETY**

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# Special Edition

**COMPLIMENTARY ISSUE**

## Summer Conference

# Celebrating God's Faithfulness

*Pastor Mika Kostamo*

*Here at Saalem Thunder Bay, on the Finnish side we are getting very excited about hosting the Summer Conference at the end of July. As we have started to think about the conference, we have once again been struck by the faithfulness of God and so this summer we want everyone to truly come with a heart to celebrate His faithfulness.*

When we start to look back on our Finnish history here, it is amazing to see that we have had over 100 years of active Finnish ministry in North America. Our own Todistaja paper is now celebrating 90 years of sharing testi-

monies of God's work. As I have heard the stories of days gone by of active ministry within our Finnish fellowship it has brought great joy to rejoice over what God has done. Many of you, who have been part of this active ministry over its many years, have your own stories of how God has worked and saved lives. How wonderful to reflect on the faithfulness of God!

Let me stop here for a moment to thank and honor those of the Finnish community that have been part of actively ministering and reaching out to other Finns over these last many years. Know that your work has not gone unnoticed and your prayers have not gone

unheard. It is your prayers and work with the Holy Spirit that has had a lasting impact to this day. Thank you for your faithfulness to the work and to the Lord. Only eternity will show all that was accomplished. For me personally, it is such a joy and great encouragement, as a young pastor, to hear about the work that many of you have done and to see God's faithfulness through all these years. I can clearly see that we are building on what many of you older ones have for years been praying and believing for. It is an honour and privilege to partner with you in this work that spans decades.

We have so many things to be thank-

ful for and so many years of seeing God faithfully work within our churches. So, it is with this great anticipation that we invite you all to join us this summer to celebrate the faithfulness of God throughout the years. With that said, some of you may feel as though your own faith walk has become fractured and distant from the Lord so let me encourage you today that God, in this season, IS going to restore you and all of us once again to that First Love. God has been and continues to be on the move! Loving what the Holy Spirit is up to.

*Pastor Mika Kostamo*



# My Miracle Therapist



Saara Leppänen

**Two summers ago, I could not breathe anymore. I was choking. Rage and confusion overwhelmed me. It was all consuming. How could I be feeling this way? My family was doing well. Life was interesting, full of promise. Working in Tanzania and serving God full-time was a dream come true. I quickly realized that something was wrong...and that I needed help. This anger could not be "normal".**

Within days Kristina came into my life. She was calm, articulate, wise, and someone who understood the anger. She was also a therapist who understood the truth behind the smiles, a real answer to prayer. I was safe, but I struggled to articulate the anger and pain I

felt. After all, a "good Christian" isn't angry or bitter - or so I thought. Maybe I just needed greater faith. That's where the answers were. God knows our struggles and our pain. Why do we need to talk about them? Prayer and studying the Word should be enough!

It did not take long for her to figure out what was going on. Within a few sessions it became obvious that I had PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I thought it only affected soldiers and war veterans! To that, she also added, "Strategic Survival Personality" and "Boarding School Syndrome." Big words, but are they actually real issues?

My life, in a nutshell, had been full of adventure and excitement. I had lived in six countries by the time I was 10 years old. During this time I went

to five different schools and learned quite quickly that I had to adapt or not be accepted. In one of the countries, Ethiopia, there was also an ongoing communist revolution. Violence and fear surrounded our life. The sound of gunshots kept me up at night.

"Do you get flashbacks?" Kristina asked. "And what do you see when you get them?" I saw tanks, guns waving, men with guns chasing us, military checkpoints, dead bodies in ditches, extreme poverty and disease. Never feeling safe. Alone. Do I have any happy memories? Sure. Somewhere. After all, my life had been an exciting adventure, right?

Identifying feelings, addressing thought patterns, and learning to express emotion overwhelmed me. I could not absorb what was going on in my head. I felt messed up, walking around the house in circles, and forgetting what I was doing. I started taking prescription medications. I would do anything to get better. I waited, but I started losing sleep. Apathy took over. I was tired, dizzy. I could not drive. Then tremors started. What was happening to me? Why was I feeling side effects without any benefits? Clearly the medication wasn't working.

"We could try a new therapy, by the name of EMDR, Eye Movement Desensitizing and Reprocessing Therapy," Kristina suggested. You go through all of your past and current traumas, and reprogram the pictures you see. "Let's wait a few more weeks," I said. If you ask me, the therapy sounded a little scary. And then I thought, "Maybe I should ask Jesus for help. After all, isn't He the ultimate healer?" I was in full-time mission work, but deep down I knew that I had not surrendered it all. I still held on to

childhood hurts and bitterness. Plus, I had an image to maintain - the "good Christian" image. As a survivor, and as one with chameleon-like instincts, I could make it look good. And I believed the lies I told myself. "This is as good as life gets, serving to the best of my abilities, and sacrificing everything I knew to give. What else could He want?" I knew He had something better for me.

The next altar call at our church had me on the floor, sobbing, for hours. I did not care what anyone else thought anymore. I just wanted Jesus to answer. I felt someone holding me tight. The safety I felt was immense. At that moment the flashbacks started coming back, but now they were different. This time Jesus was in each of the memories. Standing beside me, walking, holding, or sitting, He was always there. All the times where I was alone and frightened, He was there. He performed EMDR on my memories. Miracle therapy!

A few days later I saw Kristina. I was vibrating, but with joy this time. We spoke about what had happened, and her smile got wider and wider. She could see the difference! I was different. The anger was gone. I could not stop smiling. I had fallen in love with Jesus. "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5b, NIV)

He is still there, every morning. After 40 years of trying it on my own, it took honesty and full surrender to finally get to the relationship I had been craving. The smiles are wider, the praise more frequent, and I know the Word is alive.

Saara Leppänen

## Friendship and Fellowship

The Thunder Bay-Salem church ladies spent the weekend at the church camp on May 13th and 14th. The program consisted of praise, prayer and teaching. During the weekend we heard personal testimonies as well as instruction on how important it is to spend some time in prayer, Bible reading and praising - not only in the church but also in the midst of everyday life. We



enjoyed a variety of foods as well the sauna during the weekend. The participants' age range was wide - twenties

to over seventy years of age.

Text and picture: Inkeri Tuikka

## Out of Ashes

*Out of ashes You have brought me  
and shown me beauty all around.  
From the swelling waves  
You lifted me,  
and set my feet on solid ground.  
From chains You have freed me  
and let me soar on eagle's wings.  
From my silence You released me  
so that now my heart can sing.*

*I had nothing left to give,  
but You filled my empty heart.  
You put the pieces back together  
and you fixed the broken parts.  
I know that You're not finished yet,  
and that this is not the end.  
And I know the work that you began  
You will finish with Your hand.*

Anita Kuparinen



# Behind the Scenes of Missionary Funding

*My sister-in-law Ruut is one of those women who seems to excel at whatever she does. She's an excellent writer and speaker; she can cook and knit. She is a funny, thoughtful, organized and wise woman of God. I am not sure whether there's anything she can't do if she sets her mind to it. Of course, as one who has been blessed with many talents, she also has a lot of responsibilities.*

Ruut is going on her third year as the Asia Director for Fida, a Finnish development and mission organization. She is responsible for 17 countries and approximately 60 missionaries, which means that her job is both physically and emotionally taxing. She spends a lot of time flying between different time zones and countries, often many times a month. She is not only responsible for the missionaries themselves, but also their budgets, training, support and safety. Fortunately, Ruut has a regional team that she works with closely in order to keep things running smoothly and efficiently. She is also a member of the Fida board, which meets regularly to discuss, reflect and make decisions. Recently the board has had to make some very difficult decisions in light of recent budget cuts by the Finnish government to development work. In March, we had the opportunity to visit Ruut (and my brother Henry) in Thailand and I asked her a few questions about her work with Fida.

**What or who has helped you the most in your work?**

Speaking with older (retired) missionaries who have been so open and honest about their experiences has been refreshing and helpful. The discussions we have had on the Fida board have been such a positive experience; free and open communication is so useful. Also, working at a grassroots level with the locals in different countries has enabled us to be more effective and have a much broader impact.

**What is your biggest challenge right now?**

Pakistan. Although each country has



Ruut Mononen

left a lasting impression on me, Pakistan stands out because the work we have been doing there will no longer be funded by Fida. This is a direct result of government cutbacks. Most people know that there were big cutbacks by the Finnish government to development work. In Asia, this translated into approximately 1.2 million euros being cut from the budget. This has meant downsizing some projects and canceling others. Peshawar, Pakistan, for example, won't be getting any more government money. We have been supporting the women there to learn to read, and to sew. This in turn has allowed Pakistanis there to read the Bible, to follow instructions for giving out medicine, to go to the market; everyday things we take for granted.

We also have a Christian school there, near the border of Afghanistan, which is an elementary school made

up of (minority) Christians and Hindus. We were involved in starting the school a few years ago and it is a great support to the local Christians there. The school is in danger because of cutbacks, but God spoke to me about the importance of continuing to support the kids there. We need to find a way to keep this work going. So, we are hoping to get sponsors through Fida who would commit to sponsoring the school so that we would be able to continue the work there. Although there is no more government money earmarked for this project, if people sign up as sponsors for the school, then we can continue.

**How would you challenge us?**

I have been thinking a lot about God's mercy and justice; He challenges us to be like Him. And yet, rather than

fighting against injustice, our thoughts are so easily consumed by economic downturns, terrorism, depression and ourselves. We live in a culture of fear and our natural instinct is to try to secure ourselves and our loved ones. We are trying to be as safe as possible and in doing so are hindering our opportunities to positively impact the world. In the west, particularly, we have been given so much. We are blessed. We can certainly afford to help those close to us as well as those farther away. We have the ability to create positive change, but we need to be willing to take some risks and step outside of the walls of safety we've created for ourselves. I challenge people to pray and ask God about whose life He wants them to impact/influence.

Annika Huttunen

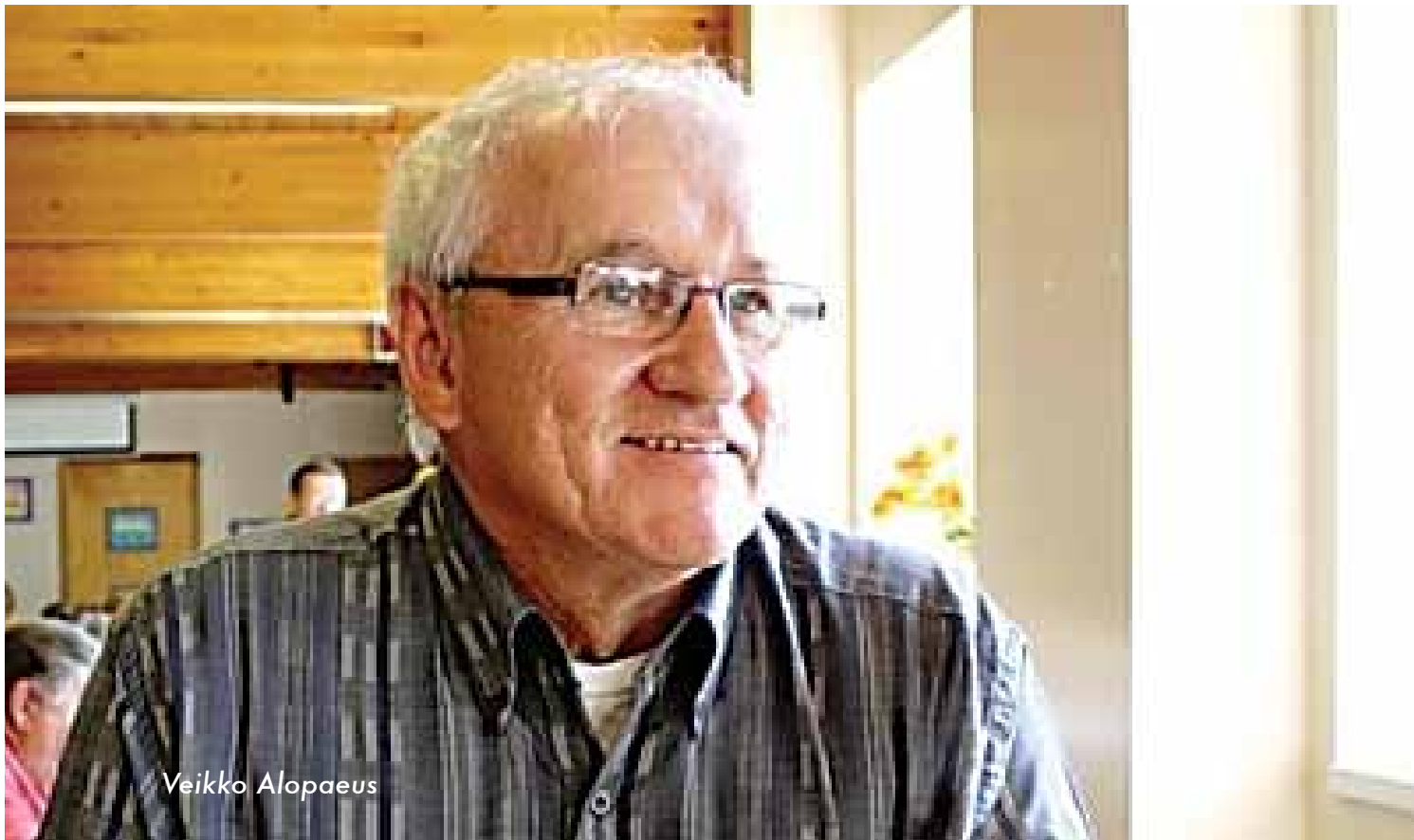
**ALBERTA NEEDS PRAYER!**

*Please pray for the people of Fort McMurray and the surrounding areas where wildfires are causing massive destruction. More than 80,000 people have been evacuated and approximately 2,400 homes have been damaged or destroyed. Pray that God will pour rain upon the area so that the fires will be brought under control and that He will protect, strengthen and encourage the firefighters and first responders. Pray also that God will comfort the people in the affected areas who may have lost their homes and are facing an uncertain future, and that He will guide and provide for evacuated residents in the coming months. ERDO is responding through two church partners. Find out more information at <http://www.erdo.ca/alberta-wildfire-crisis>.*

PAOC Missions Hotline



# Is There a God?



Veikko Alopæus

**Several years ago, I was at a camp in Thunder Bay spending time in prayer. Someone might ask why pray or even argue that there is no God. Have I ever seen God? Does He desire prayer?**

I was thinking about all of this as I prayed, but, then, a new thought came to my mind: when I hear about apples, I will know. The thought made no sense but it caused me to spend more time in prayer. Upon arriving back home in Sault Ste. Marie, someone came crying to me about a person dying in the hospital. When I went to visit the patient with their friend, her husband would not allow us to stay. The next day I returned anyway and when I saw the husband, he told me that his wife had asked for the strangest thing - a dozen apples. Then I told him about my prayer in Thunder Bay. He immediately invited me into his wife's hospital room where she was lying at death's door. When I spoke, she began crying and said she had gotten angry at God many years ago and walked her own way. Bitterness had overwhelmed her and now, facing death, she had no peace. I had words of reconciliation for her about the forgiveness of God; not my own words but from the Word of God.

After I left the hospital I went to my Dad's place. He was writing a book and he showed me what he had just penned in his book that day. One of the phrases he had written was "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). I believe he was inspired by God to pen those words the same way that I was inspired in Thunder Bay to visit the lady in the hospital.

The Bible was written many years ago.

A lot of people use the argument that the Bible was written by man and there is no God. It is open to interpretation and even misunderstanding. Some might say that maybe there is a God but He is not what the Bible portrays Him to be. To all of these people I would ask: was that verse "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" inspired by God or written by man? It does say in the Bible, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." So, could God have inspired the writing in the Bible?

If there was no God, there would be no beauty. Just stop and think of a bird or tree, or even the human body, for example. Would it not be an insult to say that these things just happened? What about love? What about sight or hearing? If there is a God, would He not reveal Himself to His creation? The beauty around us testifies of Him and His love. Would He not let Himself be known? Think of

an ant hill. If you saw an enemy army approaching the ant hill how would you warn them? The easiest way would be to become an ant and tell them that they are in danger. God came to us in human form so that He could communicate with us and even warn us of dangers we can't see.

Those who know the Bible, know that the whole Old Testament foretells and describes Christ. It was written in Hebrew, centuries before His birth. The whole New Testament, or a large portion of it is Christ's message after He was born.

Although many religions exist, if the truth of that message He brought is not twisted, then you can see God revealing Himself; a loving and forgiving God who is long-suffering and whose desire for you is good.

Veikko Alopæus

Juhlimme Jumalan uskollisuutta  
*Kesäjuhlat*  
Heinäkuu. Torstai 28 - Sunnuntai 31. 2016

Juha Ketola      Eija Merilä      Riku Tuppurainen

Saalem Seurakunta, 21 Walkover St., Thunder Bay, Ontario

## 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.