

AFLC WORK IN SWITZERLAND?

Interview with Pastor Del Palmer, World Missions

By Lori Willard

Last spring, the World Missions Department went to scout out what was happening in Switzerland. They discovered there was a pastor, formerly from Brazil, who was pastoring a church in Geneva.

Augusto Fiuri and his family moved to Switzerland to better their lives. His family came from our AFLC mission work in Brazil. He has been lay-pastoring with the AFLC in Brazil. His parents are long-term in the AFLC and Augusto has been in the AFLC all his life. Pastor John Abel reached his parents and then his grandparents for the Lord. He and his parents live between the ARCA and Batatais church. Their house is on what was to be a portion of the ARCA property.

Augusto and his family were attending a Portuguese speaking church in Geneva. He had been assisting the pastor there by helping with his duties. This pastor was leaving, so the congregation asked Augusto if he would be their pastor. He told them, "I am Free Lutheran." They said, "We have watched your family and we have noticed who you really are."

Augusto came back to Brazil and was ordained, then returned to the congregation in Switzerland. Since there are connections with Brazil and with AFLC, World Missions went to find out where this congregation is coming from.

They meet in a rented building from another church. Brazilian people usually have evening services but since they are renting this facility, they need to have morning services. They also rent the same facility briefly during the week for other church related business.

World Missions wanted to see where the congregation is theologically. They discovered they were using a book called "The Evangelical Manual" written by Pastor John Abel. Nathan Olson and Jon Nelson had combined their efforts to put the manual into a modern print format. The manual then needed to be gone through for correct grammar, punctuation, etc. Missionary Becky Abel took on the task of editing it. After completion of the new format, the church is now successfully using it.

Agreement on confessional Lutheran theology is vital. One family from the congregation questioned infant baptism. The family graciously left so that the congregation could stand with their convictions. The World Missions Department thought it good to send Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and Board Member Pastor Craig Johnson to Switzerland to teach on the subject and to discuss other questions that may arise. "Standing Fast in Freedom" is being used to talk with the church body. The World Missions staff will go over the creeds as well. One question remains, "Are we on the same page theologically as them?"

There are questions about going forward. World Missions is not only looking at this as a Swiss mission field; they also are pondering how they can start the Free Lutheran Church in Europe. We all know the darkness in Europe. It would be miraculous if we could reach those fallen from faith in Europe! Also, immigrants in Europe could carry the Gospel back to their country! Pastor Del Palmer and the World Missions Board covet your prayers for wisdom and discernment!

