



NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN WALDENSIAN SOCIETY, INC.

Waldensian Churches in Italy,
Argentina, Uruguay and the US

December 2007
Volume 11 ~ Issue 1

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF INTO THE LIGHT

- 2 VA Church Visits Valleys
- 4 Donor List
- 5 Board of Directors
- 6 Seminaries/Colleges
- 10 News of the Society
- 13 Focus on Italy
- 18 Focus on South America

A Message from President Lettini

By Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini

This Advent season we celebrate God's hope for the world. God's hope is not optimism. Jesus was not born in easy times, but in a country occupied by an imperial power. Every holiday pageant reminds us of the gospel accounts of Mary and Joseph sleeping in a stable because there is no other place for them to stay.



Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini

Today many children are born in countries experiencing military occupation, countries torn apart by violence and war. These children are born in places that offer little or no food, water, shelter, health care, or education. This holiday season offers the opportunity to think about the deeper source of Christian hope in a world broken by violence and injustice. In the Christmas story, God's hope is in a vulnerable baby who when grown, will embody God's will and preach God's love and justice. Two thousand years ago, not many people recognized God's embodiment in that baby.

Today we are called to look at the complex reality of our world and see signs of hope in unlikely places. The Waldensian churches

Please see *President's Letter* on page 3

Twining from Chicago to Milan

A twin church project is underway between the **First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville, Illinois** and the **Waldensian Church of Milan**. These congregations have enjoyed exchanges between members traveling and worshipping with each other. Elders from the Waldensian Church of Milan have participated in a meeting of the Libertyville Session and its committees. The Pastor of the church in Libertyville and AWS board member, **Rev. Brian Paulson**, has preached in Italian at the church in Milan.

Please see *Twining* on page 17

King's Grant Presbyterian in Torre Pellice

By Sylvia Maume



In early October, 27 members of the **King's Grant Presbyterian Church**, Virginia Beach, VA, USA, departed for a Reformation Tour in Europe. This tour was meant to take us to some key cities where our predecessors in the reformed faith lived and served our Lord.

The preceding summer in our Sunday school, we studied many of our forefathers and movements in preparation for our trip. When our teacher, Don Bradway, told us of the Waldensians, most of us had no knowledge of these faithful followers. But we were intrigued and happy to learn we would visit Torre Pellice to see how these folks lived and how they have provided leadership in Christian faith through the centuries.

When our group arrived at Torre Pellice we found a lovely small town snuggled in the mountains. We settled in the Foresteria Valdese hotel which is associated with the Waldensian community of the town. We found the hotel to be very clean, the rooms simply furnished, the food excellent, and a wine bar in the dining room! We met Luca, our guide who is on staff at the museum, and he took us to the museum to tell us the "Waldensian story," then a visit to the church and the Synod Meeting House, giving us a very detailed history of this wonderful people of faith. After dinner, our group met with **Rev. Claudio Pasquet**, the pastor of the Waldensian church in Torre Pellice. He explained to us much of the Waldensian faith, history (pre and post relationship with the Genevan reformers), current interaction with the Roman Catholic church, and being "protestant" as a minority of the population.

What was so hauntingly beautiful was the Waldensian story of survival because of faith. Beginning with Waldo, so many centuries ago, as a people of Christian faith the Waldensians have never wavered from their "tenents." We in America think that the 400 years that we have been a country is a long time. But Europe's history goes back so many

centuries before that. It is that rich history that intrigued us. And these followers of Waldo have had to endure so much. It was interesting to hear how the Waldensians had managed to "live" many years under oppression and without any of the worldly goods, only that which could be found where they lived. What a testimony of how to live out your faith despite difficulties.

The next morning another guide, Simone, led us up into the mountains to a "cave" where long ago people lived to escape the marauding armies and worship. We also saw a small one-room building with no more room than for a dozen children, which was their school. Since these people had to depend on what they had around them, they used talcum, found locally, as chalk. Another local gentleman befriended us to show us a small "museum" which was very close to his home.

Truly the experience we had in Torre Pellice was one we will long remember. As a good group of Presbyterians tracing our Protestant Reformation heritage, we had named our tour "Getting Calvinized". Little did we realize that in visiting Torre Pellice to learn more about the Waldensian's we would step back more than 300 years before Luther and Calvin to the real roots of reformation. We certainly feel a close kinship with the Waldensians, true leaders in the reformation movement.

President's Letter from page 1

in Italy and Latin America are small beacons of God's hope. As friends of the American Waldensian Society, we celebrate the witness of our brothers and sisters overseas. The Waldensian churches are minority churches that steadfastly try to follow Jesus Christ by engaging in ministries of love, justice and peacemaking. They care pastorally for the members of their congregations but also engage in important ministries outside their own communities, working for and with immigrants, the working poor, battered women, and indigenous people.

The Waldensian churches are minority churches that steadfastly try to follow Jesus Christ by engaging in ministries of love, justice and peacemaking.

In August 2007, I was blessed to be part of the celebration marking the 40th Anniversary of the ordination of women in the Waldensian Church in Italy. In February 2008, members of the American Waldensian Society's Board of Directors will participate in celebrations marking the 150th Anniversary of the presence of the Waldensian Church in Uruguay and Argentina (El Río de La Plata).

In October of this year, the American Waldensian Society hosted an event with deep historical importance: an encounter between representatives from the Waldensian churches in Italy and El Río de la Plata and members of the Society to discuss our common vision for the work we want to do together. The two-day meeting in Valdese, North Carolina, was a very meaningful, productive event that affected all participants profoundly and will inform our communal efforts.

In January 2008, I will travel with a group of US scholars and over thirty US Seminarians to the Waldensian Theological Seminary in Rome. We will study and worship together for two weeks, creating new relationships between the Waldensian realities in Italy and a new generation of US ministers and leaders. For more information about this and other events sponsored by the American Waldensian Society, please visit our web-site www.waldensian.org.

The American Waldensian Society has been able to support each of these initiatives thanks to your generous contributions. As calendar year 2007 draws to a close, I express to you my deep gratitude for your support of the Society and invite you to join me in looking toward the future with hope. I invite you to keep your sister churches overseas and the American Waldensian Society in your thoughts and prayers. I urge you also to consider a financial contribution to support the ministries of love and justice of La Tavola Valdese in Italy and La Mesa Valdese in South America. The American Waldensian Society stands ready to assist you in making tangible the spirit of solidarity.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of AWS, I extend to you my best wishes for a meaningful, hopeful and renewing holiday season.

May the peace of Christ be with you,

Gabriella Lettini

Donor List - Individuals

Alexander, Mr. Paule, NY
 Allio, Martha, NY
 Aronica, Aline, IL
 Bade, Carl & Marie, PA
 Bayley, Ray W. G., WI
 Bell, Mary Ellen Trust
 Bender, William & Ellen, PA
 Berutti, Ms. Virginia, NJ
 Beatriz Bonnett & Michael
 Boczar, Mr. Jon, NJ
 Bounous, Jewell, NC
 Bounous, Louis, NC
 Bradway, Donald & Susan
 Braker, James A., NY
 Brooks, LTC Jack & Mrs. Sara TN
 Brubaker, Raymond & Susan, PA
 Bruggink, Donald & Edna, MI
 Canal, David & Terry, IN
 Canal, Felix & Ada, IN
 Canal, Kathy & Dan, CO
 Canal, Daniel, CO
 Case, Peter, CT
 Corum, Mr. Fred, GA
 Coutts, Mrs. John (Blanche), IL
 Criddle, Lourene, WA
 Culverhouse, Rev. Cecil, MO
 Cunsolo, Ronald & Audrey, FL
 Cutter, Ms. Kristine, WA
 D'Arcangelo, Lois, VT
 Davit, Paul E. & Kay S., PA
 Devoogd, Lawrence, MI
 DeYoung, Terry & Cynthia, MI
 Dorival, Paula & William, NJ
 Durand, Mrs. Enes, NC
 Eason, Sam, FL
 Edwards, Evelyn, NY
 Ezell, Dr. Susan J., PA
 Ferlino, Jack, PA
 Fiorino Wolf, Ann Marie, NY
 Fox, Morley E. Trust
 Foxall, Ms. Jane, CT
 French, Russell Neal, NH
 Furr, James & Elizabeth, NC
 Garcia, Yolanda E. Gilles, FL
 Garro, Robert K., IL
 Gaydou, Dan & Lou Ann, MI
 Gibson, Frank & Maria, CO
 Grifone, Dr. James W., CA
 Groom, Myrtle V., WA
 Hake, Dexter & Carol, CA
 Hauer, Chris & Elizabeth, AL
 Heathman, William, WA
 Heisey, Ms. Mary, PA
 Horton, Norma L., SC
 Hunsicker, Robert & Hedwig, PA
 Ikeler, Rev. Carol, IN
 Iosso, Christian, KY
 Jacumin, Jr., Emile & Phyllis, NC
 Jacumin, Jimmy & Nancy, NC
 Jacumin, W & Sharon, NC
 Janavel, Odette M., NY
 Jervis, Jane, CT
 Jervis, Rev. Laura, NY
 Jervis, Madeline, VA
 Kennell, Tom & Lynn, IL
 Klein, Carl Frederick, WI
 Knooihuizen, D.S. & Emilia, OH
 Kovacs, Mr. Luciano, NY
 Kowalsky, Yvonne & Walter, NY
 Lettini, Rev. Dr. Gabriella, CA
 Lewis, Prof. Brad, NY
 Mabbs, Robert D. & Alice G., SD
 Maddox, Evelyn & Fred, KS
 Mariano, Mr. Roberto, NC
 Mason, Inez (Mrs. Tip), FL
 McKenzie, Robert & Marilyn, CA
 Migliore, Daniel & Margaret, NJ
 Miller, Grayson & Nancy, VA
 Mollar, Robert J., MD
 Moutoux, Edgar, NY
 Mueller, Rev. Robert, TX
 Myers, Frederick & Elizabeth, MA
 Nardi, Gerard & Shirley, ME
 Nassimbene, Robert & Tammy, CO
 Nieweg, Dorothy & Elroy, VA
 O'Connor, Mrs. Billie, CO
 Orr, Mary M., PA
 Outterson, Hugh & Barbara, NY
 Palmer, Mr. William, NC
 Pascal, Edward, NC
 Paschetto, Mr. Dino, NY
 Paulson, Rev. Brian, IL
 Peebles, Ms. M, PA
 Perl, Mr. Roger, OH
 Peyrot, Marie, IL
 Picou, Mr. Dan, NC
 Poehler, Morris & Thelma, NY
 Reeb, ClaraTrust
 Rivers, Francis & Fiammetta, NC
 Robinson, Ms. Rheta, NC
 Romano, Vincent & Constance, NJ
 Roshong, Carl & Deanna, OH
 Rostan, Jim & Linda, NC
 Rostan, Ms. June, TN
 Rostan, Mrs. Naomi, NC
 Rostan, Scott & Stephanie, NJ
 Rostan, Dr. Stephen, NC
 Sawyer, Mr. Edwin, PA
 Sherrill, Mrs. Mary, NC
 Shook, Rosalba, NC
 Simmons, David & Emilie
 Smith, Martha & Phillip, PA
 Solomon, Alfred & Ruth, ID
 St. Cyr, Robert & Ann, NY
 Sulyok, Rev. Peter, NY
 Terino, Joseph, NY
 Thiele, Mrs. Diane, WI
 Tognazzi, George & Catherine, IL
 Tron, Gus and Frances, NC
 True, Mrs. Margaret, VA
 Vinson, Mr. Robert, NY
 Weller, Rev. Dr. Nelson, NC
 Wells, Curtis & Elizabeth, TX
 Williams, Carolyn P., NC
 Wilson, Helen Yvonne, CO
 Winger, Mr. Mark PA
 Winters, Elizabeth B., PA
 Winton, David J., CT

Organizations

Calvary Presbyterian Church,
 Beaver Falls PA

Carter-Westminster Presbyterian
 Church, Skokie IL

Church of our Savior,
 Newark NJ

First Presbyterian Church,
 Libertyville IL

La Valdese Society,
 Bayside, NY

Mid-America Synod, KS

Northeast Community Center, MO

Presbyterian Men of the WPC,
 Valdese NC

Waldensian Presbyterian Church,
 Valdese NC

Farewell to Retiring Board Members

Two long-term members stepped off the Board of Directors of the American Waldensian Society in June 2007. The board moved the following in gratitude ~

WHEREAS Ms. Robinson has given the Society six years of distinguished service as a member of the Board, By unanimous vote, the Board of Directors hereby, RESOLVES to express our deep appreciation of the Society to **Rheta Micol Robinson** for her outstanding service as a Board Member. In particular, we are grateful for:

- her work in creating a bridge of affection between members of the Society in Valdese, NC and the rest of the country;
- her diligent work during the transition of the AWS national office to Valdese, North Carolina;
- her gracious hospitality and her generous spirit in all things and
- her many fine Christian qualities that have so benefited this Society, the Board of Directors and each of us individually.

We pray blessings upon her and her family and look forward to our continuing relationship with her as a member of the American Waldensian Society.

WHEREAS the **Rev. Dr. Duncan Hanson** is stepping off the Board of Directors of the American Waldensian Society; and Whereas he has served the Board with distinction for

American Waldensian Society, Inc.

208 Rodoret Street South
Post Office Box 398
Valdese, NC 28690

Phones:

866-825-3373
828-874-3560 (fax)

E-mail:

info@waldensian.org

Board of Directors

Mr. Luciano Kovacs	WC	NY
Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood	Moravian	NC
Dr. John Lafferty	PC(USA)	NC
Rev. Robert Mueller	PC(USA)	TX
Rev. Peter Sulyok	PC(USA)	NY
Prof. Bradley G Lewis	RCA	NY
Mr. Carl Bade	UCC	PA
Dr. Euan Cameron	Episcopal	NY
Mr. Felix Canal	WC	IN
Mr. Jon Chapman	PC(USA)	KY
Mr. Jack Ferlino	PC(USA)	PA
Rev. Clifford Frasier	UCC	NY
Mr. Emile M Jacumin, Jr.	PC(USA)	NC
Rev. Laura R Jervis	PC(USA)	NY
Mr. Freddy Leger	PC(USA)	NC
Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini	WC	CA
Rev. Michael Otte	RCA	NY
Rev. Dr. Brian Paulson	PC(USA)	IL
Rev. Francis Rivers	PC(USA)	NC
Ms. June Rostan		TN
Rev. Dr. Richard Sanner	PC(USA)	ME
Mr. Gus Tron	PC(USA)	NC
Mrs. Carolyn P Williams	PC(USA)	NC

12 years, By unanimous vote, the Board of Directors of the American Waldensian Society hereby RESOLVES to express its sincere gratitude for Dr. Hanson’s exceptional service to the Society and for representing the interests of the Society before the PCUSA and the RCA. In particular we are grateful for:

- his global and cosmopolitan perspective that have added insight and wisdom to our deliberations;
- his attention to the detail and process of Board actions and
- his comradeship and conviviality that have added so much to our relationship within the Board and with our global partners.

We look forward to our continuing ministry together as he continues as a member of the American Waldensian Society.

News of Seminaries and Colleges

Rome: A Crossroads of Religion ~

January 4-18, 2008

An International, Interdisciplinary Course in Ecumenical Theology

Founded in 1855, the **Facoltà Valdese di Teologia** is the oldest institution of higher learning in Italy for the study of Protestant theology. Two principles undergird the vision of La Facoltà: a keen awareness of its roots in the Protestant Reformation and a firm commitment to ecumenism. Accordingly, the seminary is a place of dialogue and formation not only for students from Italian Protestant churches, but also for many foreign students, most of them Protestant, who choose to conduct a portion of their studies in Rome. The seminary advances a reading and interpretation of Christian theology that takes into account the particular context of Italian Protestantism; the art, history, and culture of Rome; and the leading edge of Reformed scholarship. The seminary, therefore, is an important point of reference for Protestant churches interested in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.



Facoltà Valdese di Teologia

The January 2008 course at La Facoltà is entitled, “Rome: A Crossroads of Religions.” It seeks to promote dialogue among a generation of future leaders about themes both of longstanding interest and current concern. Together with the **Melanchthon Ecumenical Center**, itself the product of cooperation between the Waldensian Church and the Lutheran Church of Germany, La Facoltà Valdese will host students from U.S. seminaries associated with the international, ecumenical partners of the Waldensian Church.

With Rome as both backdrop and classroom, the course at La Facoltà proposes exploration of and reflection upon archaeology and the history of Christianity; ecumenism; religious pluralism; and the relationship between church and state. Five scholars from the United States have agreed to accompany students to Rome and collaborate with professors at La Facoltà in teaching the course. These scholars are **Dr. Gabriella Lettini**, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt Director of Studies in Public Ministry at Starr King School for the Ministry - Graduate Theological Union; **Dr. Euan Cameron**, Henry Luce III Professor of Reformation Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York; **Dr. Dawn DeVries**, the John Newman Thomas Professor of Systematic Theology at Union-PSCE; **Dr. Diane Lipsett**, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins and **Dr. Craig Atwood**, John Comenius Visiting Professor of Moravian Studies at Wake Forest University Divinity School.

Five institutions and 34 students will participate in the course ~

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York: Elizabeth Barb, Charlie Becker, Robert Brunson, Jane Duffield, Douglas Grace, Jeanette Hicks, Susan Hill, Jane Huber, Mary Ellen Kris, Melissa Lemons, Julie Locke, David Orr, Suleima Rosario, Tracie Saunders, Millard Southern, Sergey Trostiyanskiy

Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education, VA: Nina Adkins, Susan Dietrich, Martin Garner, Lisa Hampson, Thomas Harley, Aaron White



News Brunswick Theological Seminary, NJ: Kent A. McHeard



Wake Forest University Divinity School, NC: Ward Page, Andrew Heil, Kellie Browne, Vince Webb



Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA: Rafael Pozos, Andy and Sarah Karlson, Perry Pike, Richard Mullinax, Cathy Rion, Shams Cohen

Reading Suggestions for Course Participants

History and Literature

- Augias, Corrado. *The Secrets of Rome: Love and Death in the Eternal City*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2007.
- Tourn, Giorgio. *You Are My Witnesses: The Waldensians Across 800 Years*. Torino: Claudiana, 1989.

Contemporary History and Politics

- Jones, Tobias. *The Dark Heart of Italy: An Incisive Portrait of Europe's Most Beautiful, Most Disconcerting Country*. New York: North Point Press, 2003.
- S tillé, Alexander. *The Sack of Rome: Media+Money+Celebrity=Power=Silvio Berlusconi*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006 (Columbia University Professor)

Cultural Differences

- Parks, Tim. *Italian Neighbors*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.
- Severgnini, Beppe, *La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind*. New York: Broadway Books, 2006.
- Munari, Bruno: *Speak Italian: The Fine Art of the Gesture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005.

Filmography: Italian movies set in Rome that are easily rentable in the US and can offer an introduction to Italian history, politics, culture and arts.

A Special Day, by Ettore Scola, 1961
 Accattone Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961
 Bellissima, by Luchino Visconti, 1951
 Besieged, by Bernardo Bertolucci, 1998
 The Best of Youth, by Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003
 The Bicycle Thief, by Vittorio De Sica, 1948
 The Caiman, by Nanni Moretti, 2006
 Caterina in the Big City, by Paolo Virzi', 2005
 The Conformist by Bernardo Bertolucci, 1979
 Don't Tell, by Cristina Comencini, 2005
 Facing Windows, by Ferzan Opzetek, 2003
 The Facts of Murder, by Pietro Gremi, 1959
 Fellini's Roma, by Federic Fellini, 1972
 The Greatest Love (Europe 51), by Roberto Rossellini, 1952
 The Grim Reaper (La Commare Secca), by Bernardo Bertolucci, 1962
 His Secret Life (Ignorant Fairies), by Opzetek, 2001

La Dolce Vita, by Federico Fellini, 1960
 The Last Kiss, by Gabrtiele Muccino, 2001
 L'Eclisse by Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962
 Love and Anarchy by Lina Wertmuller, 1973
 Mamma Roma by Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962
 Mignon Has Left, by Francesca Archibugi, 1988
 The Night of Cabiria, by Federico Fellini, 1957
 Open City, by Roberto Rossellini, 1945
 The Orchestra Of Piazza Vittorio, by Agostino Ferrente, 2006
 Poor But Beautiful by Dino Risi, 1961
 The Red Wood Pigeon, by Nanni Moretti, 1989
 Remember Me, My Love, by Gabriele Muccino, 2003
 Towards Evening, by Francesca Archibugi, 1991
 Umberto D., by Vittorio De Sica, 1952
 The Waldensians, by Paolo Emilio Landi, 2006
 We All Love Each Other So Much, Ettore Scola, 1974

Enthusiastic Support Abounds for the Course at La Facoltà

The cost of the course is US \$1,500. (This sum includes room and board but not airfare). Participants will lodge at La Casa Valdese, located within walking distance of the seminary.

The **American Waldensian Society**, the **Rostan Family Foundation** and the **Waldensian Presbyterian Church of Valdese** are providing financial support for the five professors and financial assistance for eleven students attending from the United States. The Rostan Family Foundation donated \$4,000 and the MADE (Making A Difference Endowment) of the Waldensian Church matched that with its own \$4,000. The Society is providing approximately \$10,000.

Emerging Partnership with Wake Forest Divinity

By Bill J. Leonard, Dean

As a church historian, I have been particularly grateful for the relationship that has developed with the **Wake Forest University Divinity School**, the **American Waldensian Society**, and **La Facoltà Valdese** in Rome. The word and witness of the Waldensian communities remains a valued contribution to the church and the world and I am glad that our students can develop connection to those communities as they begin their ministries. We have already benefited from the scholarly contribution of Professors **Daniele Garrone** and **Paolo Naso**, adjunct professors at the Divinity School, their presence made possible by generous gifts from the Valdese, North Carolina community. Likewise, we anticipate the development of further connections as two of our professors, **Drs. Diane Lipsett** and **Craig Atwood** joined by 4 current students participate in a winter course at La Facoltà in Rome in January. We are deeply grateful for additional funding from Valdese that facilitates their travel. We also hope to forge extended connections with the Valdese community in the months and years ahead. We hope to continue welcoming adjunct professors from La Facoltà, offer new opportunities for our students and faculty to teach and study in Rome, and solidify work together here in North Carolina. The move of the American Waldensian Society to Valdese, NC is a particularly beneficial opportunity for all of us.



Bill Leonard

These connections reflect important networks that anticipate the future for educational institutions and churches nationally and internationally, relationships that allow groups to share common ministries, resources and colleagues in ways that benefit all of us. We also help our students learn how to relate to the history and mission of movements with which they have had little or no contact. Most of all we learn from and listen to one another in our efforts to discern the presence and work of God in the world.

As dean of the Divinity School, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my friend and colleague **Francis Rivers** who has encouraged these relationships and worked unceasingly to open doors to greater conversation and participation. I also appreciate the energy that **Jim Rostan** and others in Valdese have brought to these endeavors. We are excited about the future and delighted for what these efforts can mean to churches, faculties and students now and in the future.

A Visit to Davidson College

Professor Paolo Naso, who was a visiting professor at Wake Forest Divinity School this fall, and Reverend Francis Rivers, the Executive Director of the American Waldensian Society, spent Thursday, October 4th, visiting Davidson College, an undergraduate liberal arts institution, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA), about twenty miles north of Charlotte, NC. Davidson is a highly selective independent liberal arts college for 1,700 students. Since its establishment in 1837 by Presbyterians, the college has graduated 23 Rhodes Scholars and is consistently regarded as one of the top liberal arts colleges in the US.

Their hosts for the day were Professor Douglas F. Ottati, the Craig Family Professor of Reformed Theology, and Professor Timothy A. Beach-Verhey, the Director of the Lilly Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation. The visit was co-sponsored by the Religion Department, the Lilly Programs, and the Chaplain's Office. The day was organized around two programs. First, Professor Naso had lunch with a dozen Davidson students interested in interfaith issues. Over sandwiches and sweet tea, Professor Naso introduced students to the impact of religious pluralism and the state of interfaith dialogue in Europe generally and Italy in particular. The students, who ranged across all classes, majors, and religious backgrounds, engaged enthusiastically in discussion with Professor Naso following his opening remarks. They learned a lot, coming away with a deep respect for Professor Naso, greater understanding of religious diversity in Italy, and an introduction to the life and history of the Waldensian Church.

In the late afternoon, Professor Naso met with a small group of faculty and staff, in the Faculty Lounge on the second floor of Chambers Hall. Over wine and light refreshments, Professor Naso and the participants discussed religious pluralism in



Douglas Ottati



Timothy Beach-Verhey

Italy, comparing and contrasting it to the American experience. It was a fascinating interdisciplinary and cross-cultural interchange.

Between the two events, Professors Ottati and Beach-Verhey took Professor Naso and Rev. Rivers on a tour of the campus, which included a visit to the new Dean Rusk Center for International Studies, and a discussion with the Director, Christopher Alexander, about the new International, Interdisciplinary Course in Ecumenical Theology at the Waldensian Seminary and Melancthon Ecumenical Center, entitled "Rome—A Crossroads of Religion." Dr. Alexander was very interested in the program and believed that funds from the Dean Rusk Center might be available for students who wanted to attend in future years. At the end of this long day at Davidson College, Professor Ottati and Professor Beach-Verhey took Professor Naso and Reverend Rivers to dinner. They had a wonderful dinner together and discussed, among many other things, the possibility of a delegation from Davidson College attending the Rome-A Crossroads of Religions Conference in future years and their desire to maintain contact between Davidson College, the American Waldensian Society, and the Waldensian Seminary in Rome. It was a well-spent, enjoyable, and productive day for all involved—the seed of what may prove to be a fruitful relationship.

Back to Italy



Paolo Naso

“Public and Private Religion in the New Europe,” this was the title of my fall course at **Wake Forest University Divinity School**, Winston-Salem, NC. It was my first real experience teaching in the USA and as you can imagine, I started it with many questions in my mind. The first and the most important was: Will the Old Europe interest the American students? My fear and doubt, in fact, were that so specific a topic would have a modest impact on an American audience. From the other side I intentionally wanted to focus my class on Europe, since I believe the unification process in the framework of the Union is a major cultural and political fact, with important international consequences. Furthermore the “religious parallel” between Europe and USA is astonishing and challenging; more and more secularised the old continent, consistently religious the “new” America.

The big surprise was the prompt interest by the students and some colleagues at WFU, as well as at Davidson College (NC) and at the Pacific School of Religion (CA) for this approach. I wanted to share this personal story because this surprising interest isn’t isolated. Next January more than 30 US students and scholars will attend a “winter school” at the Waldensian Seminary in Rome, focusing on similar topics. It will be the first time after some decades. As this exchange program was proposed and planned, the organizers were skeptical about a consistent positive answer by US students. On the contrary, the response was overwhelming and the Waldensian seminary had to provide extra accommodations. The initial number anticipated was twenty. So I can conclude that in the USA there is a new interest and consideration for Europe: culturally, theologically and politically speaking. This interest could generate new exchange programs under the responsibility and the umbrella of the American Waldensian Society.

It’s important to mention that a similar and parallel interest exists in Italy towards the USA. In early November in Rome, there was a joint session of the Waldensian-Methodist Synod and of the Baptist Assembly. About 300 representatives of local congregations gathered to discuss common actions as well as controversial issues such as the church attitude towards homosexuality and homosexuals. It was an important step for the life of Italian Protestantism. It’s also important to mention the big participation at a preliminary conference on Martin Luther King, Jr. and his ministry for peace and justice. The conference was attended also by some US religious leaders and, again, we could experience the importance of a constant dialogue to share visions, projects, experiences.

This is what AWS is doing and, hopefully, will continue to do. The new strategies that this ecumenical body is considering will require energy, courage and resources but, at the same time, will offer new opportunities to experience European, North and South American fraternal solidarity in the Christian mission. This is what I strongly experienced during the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board meetings this Fall where I was kindly invited to attend. We made new ideas, new solidarities, new relations to improve ministries of evangelism, peace, justice in Italy, USA, Argentina and Uruguay. This connection will be possible through a re-interpretation and a re-invention of the “Waldensian heritage”; an essential historical and spiritual root to shape a Christian witness in the XXI Century.

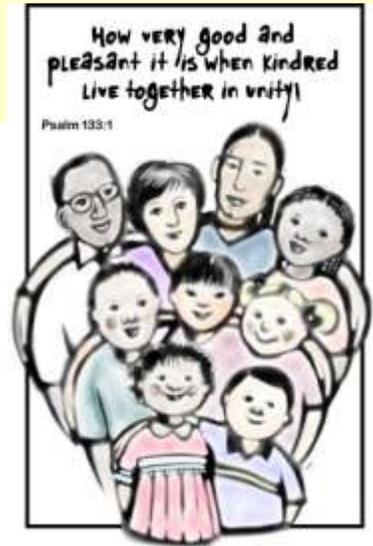
News of the Society ~

Long-Term Plans Underway: A Strategic Planning Retreat

By Rev. Rob Mueller - Board Member

Ever since I first met the two Waldensian young adults who came to work with my congregation, **Divine Redeemer Presbyterian**, in San Antonio, TX in 1995, I sensed a kindred spirit...even though I knew nothing about the Waldensians, their history of persecution, their stalwart defense of religious pluralism, or their passion for social justice. Yet as my wife, Lodie, and I sat with these young volunteers, drinking traditional “máte” and sharing the story of their church in Uruguay and Argentina, our hearts were kindled by a single spirit.

So, I was not surprised by the kindredness that I experienced among the gathering of Waldensians from three continents in Valdese, NC to assist the AWS in defining our strategic goals for the next few years. The warm and generous hospitality of the natives of Valdese provided the perfect environment for us to engage in this important work. As we labored together to examine the history, the present and the future hopes of the AWS and its relationships with US Protestants and the National Churches in Italy, Uruguay and Argentina, I discovered how this particular incarnation of the Reformed Tradition’s way of following Jesus offers a unique and prophetic witness for our global community.



I delighted in the opportunity to walk the **Trail of Faith** and learn about the deep history of faithfulness and resistance that has shaped all Waldensians into a people of conviction and of courage. I cherished learning about the Italian Waldensians reputation among their countrymen for using the money collected by the government’s 8/1000 tax *exclusively* for service to neighbors and not for the shoring up of the church’s own needs or wants. As the pastor of an ethnic Latino congregation, I resonated with the struggles of the South American Waldensians to evangelize the larger society which does not necessarily share their ethnic identity and heritage.

I was surprised, however, to learn that this was the *first* time that representatives from all three continents had gathered in the same place to hammer out goals and future work in this face-to-face way. This ability to listen and learn from one another in a mutually encouraging way was what I have come to expect and anticipate in the work of mission. Such mutuality protects the dignity and worth of each person’s perspective and contributions, and guarantees a much better outcome to our collaborative endeavors. I am confident that our common effort yielded directions for AWS which will strengthen not only the American Waldensian Society, but its sister institutions as well.

Personally, I count it a privilege to walk together with these sisters and brothers and to deepen the kindred spirit that I first sensed over ten years ago.

AWS New Mission Statement, Adopted June 2007:

The American Waldensian Society fosters dialogue and partnership among Waldensian Churches in Italy and South America and Christian churches within North America in order to promote a compelling vision of Waldensian Christian witness for North America.

AWS New Vision Statement, Adopted June 2007:

AWS passionately witnesses in North America to the contemporary and historic Waldensian spiritual heritage:

- to Proclaim the Gospel
 - to Promote Social Justice
 - to Serve among the Marginalized
 - to Foster Inter-religious Work
- and to Advocate Respect for Religious Diversity and Freedom of Conscience.



Strategic Planning Retreat Participants:

L to R, first row: Emile Jacumin, June Rostan, Luciano Kovacs, Carolyn Pascal-Williams, Rob Mueller, Marcelo Nicolau, Paolo Naso, Francis Rivers, Freddy Leger
 L to R, back row: Brian Paulson, Dario Barolin, Sergio Velluto, Sam Avery (Consultant)

AWS Position on War:

Whereas the United States of America is currently at war; and
 Whereas war among any peoples anywhere is grievous to our Creator; and
 Whereas the activities of the United States government may adversely impact the relationship of the American Waldensian Society with our global partners,
 WHEREAS, The Board of Directors of the American Waldensian Society wish to affirm:

- That we are a peace-loving people;
- That we strive to live and to work in such a way as to advance the justice, well-being and unity of the peoples of the world;

Therefore be it RESOLVED on this 4th day of June, 2007 at a meeting of the Board of Directors: we reaffirm our resolve to work and pray for peace as individuals and as leaders of the American Waldensian Society and we desire to share this resolve with our global partners.

News of the Society ~ Continued

Successful Relocation of the National Office

The transition of the national office from Allentown, PA to Valdese, NC is complete. AWS Board member and treasurer, **Emile Jacumin**, oversees the day-to-day functioning of the office and works closely with **Sheila Young**, whom the Society has hired part-time as Office Administrator. Together, Emile and Sheila handle the myriad of administrative tasks associated with the work of the Society. **Francis Rivers**, Executive Director, visits the office twice a month and is in frequent contact with Emile and Sheila by phone and e-mail.

The office is located on the lower level of the recently renovated **Waldensian Heritage Museum**. We are fortunate to have such modern, pleasant accommodations. This is proving to be an effective partnership. Visitors to the museum from all over the world are greeted by the Museum director, **Gretchen Costner**, and given an informative tour. The Society benefits as Gretchen points out the Society and sells several resources in the gift shop including *You Are My Witnesses* by Giorgio Tourn.

Next June, the Society is partnering with the museum to send 20-25 friends and supporters to Italy for a tour of the Valleys. The response has been terrific!

Valdese, NC is special in its own right. Below is an excerpt from an 1895 publication of *Leslie's Weekly Illustrated* published in New York on August 22, 1895. Plan a visit this Spring when the azaleas are in bloom, www.visitvaldese.com.

The Waldenses in North Carolina.

We give on another page a number of illustrations of the colony of Waldenses in the Piedmont section of North Carolina. This colony was established in 1893, when twenty families under the leadership of their Italian pastor, the Rev. C.A. Tron, a man of marked business capacity and signal enterprise, landed in this country and took possession of the colonial property, a much larger number following a few months later. The colony now numbers about two hundred and fifty souls, some fifty heads of families. They are in the vigor of young manhood and womanhood, one-third of the whole number being under 10 years of age. The land is well adapted to the culture of the vine, wheat, tobacco and corn. It is also well wooded and will afford the colonists a variety of industries. The village of Valdese, the post-office of the colony, is a station on a railroad, covers an area of about twenty acres, and has been tastefully and regularly laid off into streets and building-lots, the latter held in trust to be sold for the benefit of church and school. The Waldenses are an agricultural people, and their chief occupation will be the cultivation of the soil, the growing of cereals and the culture of fruits and grapes, which they thoroughly understand. Moreover, the gathering of tan bark, the cutting of timber and the sawing of lumber will afford remunerative occupation to many of them and a saw-mill owned by the corporation, already gives regular employment to a considerable number. A hosiery mill has also been established at Valdese, which turns out a considerable weekly product. Education facilities are provided for the children and they are rapidly acquiring the language of their adopted country, as well as French and Italian, both of which they are taught to read and speak early in life. The future of this colony of earnest men and women, who are strong in their religious faith and love of liberty, cannot be doubtful. Freed from the limitations which hampered and harassed them in the land from which they came, they will make their way into the larger and more fruitful life which is alone possible under the conditions afforded by American institutions and laws.

ITALY

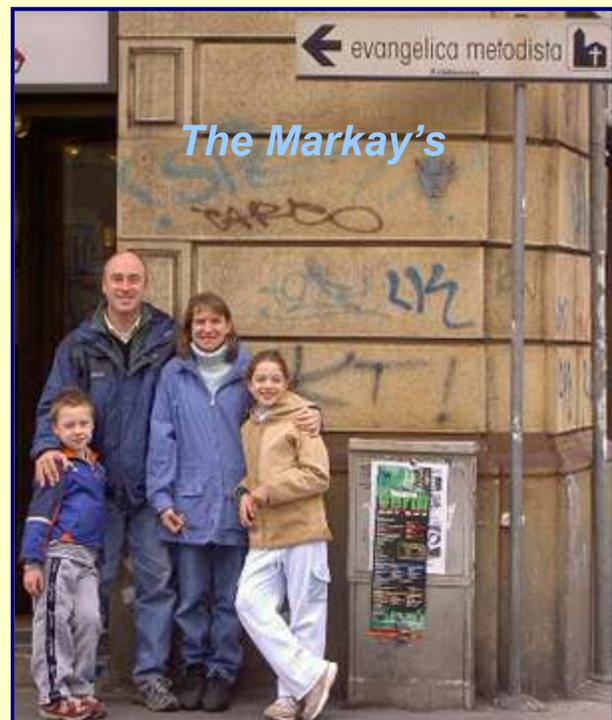
An Introduction by Executive Director, Rev. Francis Rivers. . .

The Rev. David A. Markay and his wife, Rev. Kristin C. Markay, are Missionaries with the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. They serve as pastors of the multi-cultural, English-language ministry of the **Chiesa Metodista di Milano** (The Methodist Church of Milan). AWS is grateful to David for permission to feature his reflections on the tragic murder of Giovanna Reggiani and the response of the Waldensian Church to events that the murder set in motion. The piece underscores the on-going commitment of Waldensians to solidarity with the marginalized and respect for religious diversity, two key themes in the Vision Statement of AWS on page 11.

By David Markay - 5 November 2007

Giovanna Reggiani's body was found near a train station near her home in Rome. Evidence showed that she had been sexually assaulted before being murdered. It emerged that her murderer was a Roma (gypsy) man from a nearby shantytown. The next day the police swooped into the lot and rounded up hundreds of dwellers of the camps. Many of them - most were Romanian - were deported from the country. The government began deliberations about whether or not to bulldoze the entire makeshift village.

Anti-immigrant sentiment, already simmering, hit a boiling point. Some politicians have been citing recent studies that suggest that foreigners commit a disproportionate number of crimes in Italy. Only a week prior to the murder, immigration statistics had shown that Romanians were now the largest nationality represented in Italy. The mayor of Rome had reported that seventy-five percent of all arrests in his city involved Romanians. Spontaneous rallies sprouted up all over the city. People carried placards with words such as "*Ora basta - Italia agli Italiani*" (Enough already - Italy for the Italians). A billboard poster showed the face of a Native American chief, with the words: "The Indians were not able to stop immigration - now they live on reservations." Days after the assault on Giovanna Reggiani, a gang of vigilantes with



clubs and knives beat up several Romanian men in a parking lot. During a Seria A soccer match that weekend, Lazio fans whistled in disrespect every time the Romanian star of the opposing team touched the ball. A political leader from the far right who is calling for 20,000 more expulsions of Romanians from Rome alone was cheered as he entered a television studio. Aboard a train in Florence later that week, a well-dressed Italian businessman observing the police dragging an immigrant woman down the platform, was heard to mutter, "*Meno male*" (roughly translated as "thank heaven").

The front pages of the national newspapers featured photos of Giovanna's husband at her funeral, placing a red rose on her coffin. Another printed photos of the vacant lot where she had been assaulted. Still another, a mug shot of the presumed assailant. (On page ten of one paper was an article about an unrelated incident in which a retired Italian army captain suffering from depression opened fire on a crowd from his apartment balcony - one person was killed and seventeen injured). One paper dispatched a journalist to the suspect's Roma village of Avrig in Romania, where he interviewed former neighbors. "That bastard?" recalled one of the townspeople, "he was in and out of prison even when he was here. He has brought great dishonor on all of us. So many of us have relatives in Italy. They're trying to make a better life for themselves and some kind of future for their children. You Italians have always been good to us. Why change that because of him?"

Giovanna Reggiani had been a Sunday school teacher in the Waldensian Church of Rome. At her funeral, the moderator of the

Waldensian/Methodist Church of Italy called for justice but not retribution. The Sunday after the tragedy, a banner from the previous week's conference on Martin Luther King, Jr. still hung outside the church, with the words, "*Dall'incubo puo nascere un sogno*" (A dream can be born from a nightmare). In worship that day the pastor made a plea to the city for "no violence in the name of Giovanna." One of Giovanna's fellow Sunday school teachers met with the children of their class. "Giovanna will not be here with us anymore. But she is with God," she said. She then led the children in an exercise in which they were to pat one another on the back, then increase the force a bit, then even more. Before long, these blows were causing pain. "This," she said, "is what can happen when violence is allowed to escalate." The young people talked about their former teacher, about immigrants, about Romanians, about crime, and about the role of the church. At the end, one of the teenagers said, "Perhaps one way we could help make the world better would be to invite a Romanian to dinner. Yes, nodded the teacher, Giovanna would be proud of that.

In Memoriam: Francesca Spano

By Luciano Kovacs, AWS Board Member

I met **Francesca Spano** for the first time during a student strike when at 16 I was active in the high school student movement in Pinerolo. She immediately struck me as someone with great political stature, a deep understanding of young people's longings and an ability to build bridges and relationships. Although I knew who she was because of our common affiliation to the Waldensian church, it was only a few years later, during my activism with FGEI (the **Federation of the Italian Protestant Youth**), that I got to know Francesca personally. Our friendship then cemented when a few years ago she traveled to the US during an AWS sponsored trip. In New York, she stayed at **Jan Hus Presbyterian Church** -where I currently work. During her stay we had many opportunities to walk around the city. She fell in love with McSorley's, the oldest Irish pub in the city. We had long conversations about life, work, relationships, joy, pain, life and death, God and our common love for New York. We promised each other that after her return to Italy, we would engage in a correspondence that we would leave as a witness to posterity of our beautiful friendship. This is one of the most significant memories I have of Francesca. And

her deepness of thoughts, her incredible ability to analyze the world, her spirituality and the fundamental simplicity that is at the core of genuine and profound relationships and her unrelenting work for justice encapsulate the qualities that I recall with gratitude and melancholy.

Francesca passed away on July 15 after a brief illness that tore her away from life and from us. Francesca has left a big empty space for the many people she touched, she loved, and to whom she conveyed her unmistakable optimism and love for life. Francesca was born in Cagliari (Sardegna) in 1950 to a family that was active in the former Italian Communist Party. Her mother was a member of La Costituente, the group that ratified the Constitution of the Italian Republic, after the end of WW2. After graduating from college in Rome, she joined the resident group of the **Ecumenical Center of Agape**. She was active in the student movement, the women's movement and the teacher's union affiliated with the **Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro**. She directed the magazine *Gioventu' Evangelica* and was the Vice-director of the **Centro Culturale** in Torre Pellice. She was also a member of the City council of Pinerolo.

Francesca was a feminist since the early 70's and author of many political and theological writings. Her last publication, a series of writings by Protestant women, was recently published with the title: "Words and Practices. Protestant and Feminist Women." An excerpt from her autobiographical text, "Flowery Stream of Memories," allows us to remember who she was: *Suffering and at times even violent and self-destructive death can give birth to relationships, affection, common search for life, when these are lived and thought out within the practice of solidarity.*



Photo by Gabriella Peyrot

Ciao, Francesca.

Francesca Spano Memorial Scholarship?

The Board of Directors at its October 2007 meeting made and passed the following motion:

Rev. Brian Paulson moved that the Board authorize the Executive Director to explore options for the creation of a "Francesca Spano Memorial Scholarship" and present his finding to the Board at the 2008 Spring Meeting. Carolyn Pascal Williams provided a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Francis Rivers, Executive Director, welcomes your input on the creation of the Francesca Spano Memorial Scholarship. Please send your suggestions via email to frivers@wfubmc.edu.

ITALY

Twining from page 1

The Waldensian Church of Milan is on via Francesco Sforza not far from the historic Duomo. However, its members and its ministry extend throughout the growing metropolitan area. This vibrant, urban congregation supports a cultural center and bookstore where regular intellectual and spiritual exchanges for the city occur.

The First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville is a vibrant PC(USA) congregation of 1400 souls north of Chicago with active ministries for people of all ages. This suburban congregation is comprised of members who serve pharmaceutical, technological, financial, educational, and construction industries with global reach. Most work in surrounding neighborhoods or commute to Chicago every day.



*Rev. Dr. Brian R Paulson
First Presbyterian Church
of Libertyville, IL*



*Rev. Gianni Genre
Waldensian Church of
Milan, Italy*

Preliminary steps in this twinning project have only just begun. It is hoped that the youth of both congregations will soon find avenues for exchange across the digital links of the modern world. In addition, there is discussion regarding common service projects and a shared life of prayer. Ongoing conversation is pointing toward a visit of Waldensian Pastor, the **Rev. Gianni Genre** to Libertyville so that a Waldensian witness can be heard in worship and affirmed by greater numbers.

The Rev. Paulson is available to speak with leaders of congregations that may want to pursue a partnership such as this. Interpersonal encounters often become the basis for a deepening of faith and the strengthening of Christian bonds across the seas.

Contact information for Rev. Brian Paulson: First Presbyterian Church, Libertyville, IL; 847-362-2174 or bpaulson@boxp.net.



As We Start the New Year

At your service in 2008: Francis Rivers, Emile Jacumin, Sheila Young, Carolyn Pascal Williams, Freddy Leger, Gus Tron and John Lafferty

On behalf of the Board members and staff who support the work of the national office daily, please receive our best wishes for a Happy New Year, Feliz Año Nuevo, Buon Anno!

URUGUAY - ARGENTINA

Representatives from South America Visit the United States

Delegation Meeting of 16th to 17th of September

By Jhonny Alicea-Báez

Dr. Brad Lewis and I received Francis Rivers, Executive Director of the American Waldensian Society, Pastor Marcelo G. Nicolau, a member of the executive committee of the Waldensian Church, and Pastor Dario Barolín.

On Sunday morning we met at the **Fordham Manor Reformed Church**, a scheduled stop arranged by Brad Lewis; the main objective was to see a multi-cultural church in worship and leadership. From Fordham Manor we went to **Highbridge Community Church** and from there to **United Reformed Church**, and back to Fordham Manor. This was a wonderful exposure to lay-led ministry in all four services. Lunch with Pastor **Irving Rivera** afforded us an opportunity to break bread together, as well as for the brothers to ask Rev. Rivera how he identified, prepared and commissioned leaders.

On Monday we visited **New Brunswick Theological Seminary** with the purpose of sharing with some of its faculty. **Dr. John Coakley** and **Rev. Dr. Mark Kraai** were able to spend time with the group, in a give and take that was meaningful and informative. We broke bread with the professors and proceeded to meet without them at the library.

I shared with our brothers a brief history of the RCA, and its work among Latinos in the US. Mission principles were shared, as well as the countries in Latin America where the RCA has entered into partnership relationships. I also shared with them "Our Call", the RCA's ten year goal and how that is being played out throughout the church.

Marcelo Nicolau, on behalf of the Waldensian board, raised the question on how to proceed in establishing a relationship between both churches. To pursue this, he shared three avenues: (1) an invitation to the RCA to send a delegation to the 150th anniversary celebration during the 2008 synod. The dates are February 2-6, 2008. (2) He also stated that there is interest by the Waldensians in deepening their understanding of the RCA, along with a desire to initiate the process towards walking together in partnership. (3) Three themes were outlined for living into this relationship - natural church development training; training of lay leaders for ministry, especially emphasizing the ministry of elders; and planning of visits, both way, of elders and pastors for mutual encouragement.

Francis Rivers shared that the American Waldensian Society is willing to be a part of this journey. Though we always send someone from the US to Uruguay, it may be beneficial to have a delegation from Uruguay visit with RCA congregations and see them actively involved in ministry. He also saw the need to make the RCA aware of Waldensian history.

Pastor Dario felt the love expressed to him at the churches visited. The mission principles shared previously were appreciated and these would strengthen our relationship as well as our journey together.

We prayed together, and made our last stop, **Suydam Street Reformed Church**. As we entered the elder responsible for the youth-at-risk program was on her way out, but she gave us a brief outline of the program. We met with one of the deaconesses that directs the church's senior-citizen outreach. She explained the program, the need, the manner in which the church intersects with the elderly, numbers, and some strategies. Pastor **Vicente Martínez** was able to spend some time with us, emphasizing, like Pastor Irving Rivera, the ministry of elders in growing the church and the creation of ministries that respond directly to people's needs. We prayed for both Pastor Martínez and the director of the senior citizens program, and made our way to the airport.

This was a positive visit. There is a sincere desire to partner with the RCA, and to learn from each other how to engage lay leaders in ministry. This could be our greatest gift to the Waldensian Church in Uruguay and Argentina.

*A Biographical Sketch of Our Visitors
Dario Barolin and Marcelo Nicolau*

Marcelo and Dario are both from La Paz, a city in the state of Entre Rios, Argentina and almost the same age. Marcelo is 38 years old, and Dario is 37. They grew up not far away from each other, just a couple of blocks, and use to play together as children. They both attended the same Sunday school and youth activities at the Waldensian Church in La Paz.

Immediately after high school, Marcelo went to study theology at ISEDET, the ecumenical seminary in Buenos Aires. Marcelo finished his seminary studies in 1991 and began his work as a pastor in the Waldensian Church. He is married to Marina, an elementary school teacher, and they have three children, Dinora (15), Santiago (10) and Ignacio (6). Since 2000, Marcelo has been the pastor of the Waldensian Church of Alferéz and Lascano in eastern Uruguay. Marcelo is a very good singer and guitar player.

After high school Dario studied economics for two years, then felt called to study theology at ISEDET. He finished in 1996. He studied at Princeton Theological Seminary to get his Th.M. (Masters in Theology). He is nearing completion of his Ph.D. dissertation in Old Testament at ISEDET. He has served as pastor in the Waldensian Church since 1997. Dario is married to Carola Tron, also a Waldensian pastor, and they have two children, Tomás (8) and Juan (5). In 2005 his wife was called to work in the Waldensian Church of San Salvador and Dolores.



Marcelo Nicolau



Dario Barolin

WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

The Jar of Meal Will Not Be Emptied

Why is Elijah sent to be fed by a widow who is running out of food? Does she not have enough trouble with her own misery and her own problems? She is very clear when Elijah asks her for a morsel of bread: *“As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”* (1Kings 17:12, NRSV, see also Elijah’s word in v.20) Not only does she not have any food for Elijah, she and her son do not have any hope. There is nothing left, nothing to which to wait. Only death is on God sends Elijah to be fed by this woman, the widow of Zarephath.



Jesus did something similar. When He sent out his disciples, knowing that they would go amongst wolves, He sent them without purse, bag, sandals, or even a clear set of directions (Luke 10:4). What are these prohibitions about? Is it not better to send them with resources for survival and with which to help people in need? Why does God insist on sending people on missions without providing them all that they need to perform the task?

Questions like these have been with me for a long time. I used to picture myself going out to serve people, to bring them God’s word. I liked to consider myself as the one with the capability to help, to change the lives of others. I thought of myself as one without needs, without questions, only with resources and answers. After all, God was with me. However, I did not get it. I could not deal with texts like those mentioned before. The people in these texts are not so independent. They have something to share but also need something.

I get it now. The “how” is part of the mission, because people relate themselves in a completely different way. It is no longer someone with power helping the powerless. It is a community sharing their gifts and needs. It is God blessing this communion and empowering those living in it.

Why do I share this personal experience in the Newsletter of the AWS? Well, because I think that the AWS is moving in the same way. I imagine the AWS not only as a space with resources to help the Waldensian church in Europa and El Río de La Plata but as a space of sharing, dialogue and partnership among people with gifts and needs, nursed by the spiritual heritage of the Waldensian movement.

To build such space it is necessary to consider two different aspects. On one hand, it is important that each of us recognize our own riches and necessities. On the other hand, we should consider our mission a global one. To create a community of mutuality and partnership we need to be equal. And there is not equal partners if we do not let the other bring something to the table, too. Sometimes it is necessary to empower someone to do so. It also is essential

Reflection by Dario Continued *Will AWS Get it?* The AWS? Well, because I think that the AWS is moving in the same way. I imagine the AWS not only as a space with resources to help the Waldensian church in Europa and El Río de La Plata but as a space of sharing, dialogue and partnership among people with gifts and needs, nursed by the spiritual heritage of the Waldensian movement.

To build such space it is necessary to consider two different aspects. On one side, it is important that each of us realize about our own richness and necessities, on the other side we should consider our mission as a global one. First, to create a community of mutuality and partnership we need to be equal. And there is not equal partners if we do not let the other bring something to the table too. Sometimes it is necessary to empower someone to do so. Second, it is essential

Computer Project Comes to a Close

The American Waldensian Society took on a special project last year. The goal . . . to unite the churches of South America, electronically! AWS sent enough funds to purchase 25 computers for the local congregations of Uruguay and Argentina. Plus, AWS sent additional funds for a Spanish version of on-line computer training. These churches have their new machines in place: **Reconquista, Colonia Iris, San Gustavo, Laprida, Colonia Belgrano, Bahía Blanca**, in Argentina and **Nueva Palmira, Colonia Valdense, Paysandú, Lascano, Cosmopolita, San Salvador, Ombúes de Lavalle, Miguelete and Rosario**, in Uruguay. Most have begun the training program and communications amongst the churches and the national office have improved.

Milka Charbonnier, Secretary of the **La Iglesia Evangélica Valdense del Río de la Plata (IEVRP)**, has informed the board that the final ten churches to receive the funding are settling technical, managerial and logistic problems before proceeding.



Children from Reconquista Waldensian Church Watch Program on New Laptop

AWS extends a special *Thank You* to these individuals and organizations for making the project a success.

Mr. & Mrs. George Bleynat, NC
 Mr. Jack Ferlino, PA
 Mr. & Mrs. Victor Garrou, NC
 Mr. Freddy Leger, NC
 Mr. Edward Pascal, NC
 Ms. Rheta Micol Robinson, NC
 Mr. & Mrs. Jim Rostan, NC
 Le Phare de Alpes, NC
 Waldensian Presbyterian Church, NC
 Bequest of Elda Peyronel Marelli

Review ~



Strategic Planning Consultant, Sam Avery, works diligently with AWS board members and visitors from Italy and South America.



Sheila Young, AWS part-time Office Administrator, takes directions from visiting Dario Barolin.



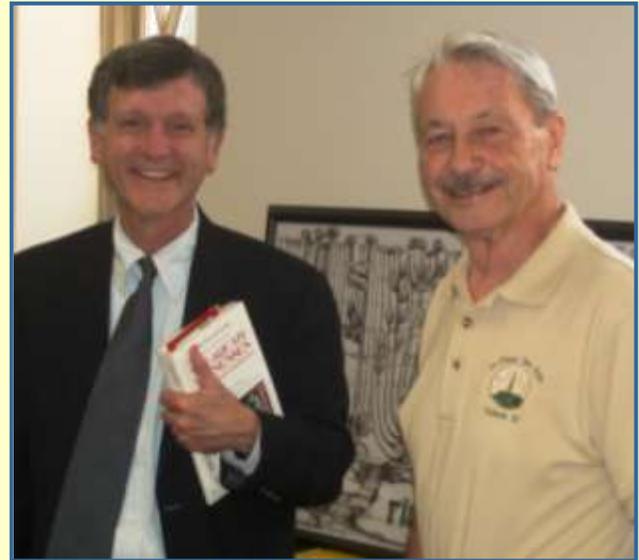
Emile Jacumin, Treasurer AWS, gave the board, visitors and their children a guided tour of the Trail of Faith in Valdese. (Model of the Waldensian Valleys shown)



Francis Rivers (L), Executive Director, takes a break from the meeting to make Thomas' soccer game. Dario can't resist and has to attend.



June Rostan, Board Member and Paolo Naso, Visitor from Italy



Gus Tron, NC – Board Member and Historical Committee member of Waldensian Museum- shows Bill Leonard around the Museum during a Visit by the Dean



Rev. Rob Mueller, TX ~ Board



Michael Otte, NY and Jack Ferlino, PA - Board



Carl Bade, PA ~ Board



Luciano Kovacs, NY ~ Board



Craig Atwood, NC ~ Board

American Waldensian Society, Inc.
208 Rodoret Street South
Post Office Box 398
Valdese, North Carolina 28690

Return Service Requested

Non Profit
US Postage Paid
Valdese, NC
Permit No. 12