



Holden Newsletter - July 2016

We hope the following highlights will help you find and read what interests you!

Main Topics

Main Points

Praises/Requests

Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,

AMAZING NEWS FROM THE HEART DOCTOR !

Recently, I went for a follow-up at the heart specialist here at the Vozandes Hospital. Just a month ago, the doctor had prescribed a low-dose beta-blocker to try to subside the uncomfortable symptoms I was having. As he was looking for my report, he asked me to remind him what the dosage was that I was using. I told him the amount prescribed but then explained that I did not get the prescription filled. Instead I am taking natural supplements under the direction of our natural physician in the U.S. He asked me how I felt and I responded telling him, **"Praise God, I feel 90% better!"** He stopped what he was doing and looked stunned asking me to clarify what I said in English (which he understands). He then asked me what supplements I was taking and said "I need to listen to your heart". He asked me lie down and then carefully listened for more than five minutes. He then backed away and said **"Maam, your heart sounds 100% perfect! I think I need to change my medical practice!"** He kept repeating "I just can't believe this; I am very surprised!" He then suggested that I return in two months to wear the 24-hour heart monitor again to compare the heart rhythms to what they were before! **Praise God for this doctor and his openness to natural medicine!**



*** Voice of the Andes Hospital - To the Glory of God and the Service of Ecuador**

WHEN GOD OPENS HEARTS; BEING LOVED BY THE CHURCH

We are blessed to have not one, but two home churches! We've been attending Woodlands Church in Plover, Wisconsin for more than 20 years. We love our church in the U.S., it's staff, and our church family. But now, for the past two years, we have another home church, here, in Ecuador. **Our two churches are the same in the ways that are the most important. They both teach accurately from the Holy Bible and their statement of faith is the same.** But they are also very different in that Woodlands has over 1,800 attendees and Iglesia del Nazareno has around 200. At Woodlands we speak, hear the Word, and worship in English, but here we do this in Spanish. Darrell and I are two of the only four non-Ecuadorians who regularly attend this little church with the other couple attending an earlier service. Also, every month, the Nazarene Church here in Carcelen, has a "Mission Sunday" acknowledging and reporting on the work God is doing through its own missionaries. Each "Mission Sunday" the congregation is encouraged to give at least one dollar (a lot in this economy) to the mission fund. - EVERY person responds with a joyful heart!



Church of the Nazarene - Called to Holiness

In the beginning of our attendance, we were introduced as visiting missionaries working with Reach Beyond but now, we are part of the church family and are acknowledged as missionaries within the church. No, they do not financially support us, but they acknowledge us as one of their own, loving and accepting us as we share God's work here in Ecuador. **So, we had the idea to share the news of the team coming from Wisconsin and invite our Ecuadorian church to be a part of that team.** Darrell, and I, introduced Boris and the Dunamis ministry and gave a 15-minute presentation (in Spanish) during the church services one Sunday morning in mid-July.

We were told by Boris that it is rare to see Ecuadorian churches participate in outreach with other churches outside of their own denomination and that he did not expect much response. So, Darrell and I prayerfully considered what we would say to the church this day. In Spanish, we told them, "We firmly believe that it is not important what denomination, church, city, or country a person is from or what language we speak. As brothers and sisters in Christ we all belong to God's church and to God's family. This is why we come to you today - to invite our Ecuador church to join together with our U.S. church to serve the Dunamis ministry!" **The response was amazing!** More than 20 people surrounded us after the service to ask questions and 15 signed-up as wanting to help. **Boris mentioned that to have 10% of the congregation initially respond and then have 7% commit to help (and actually show up later) is very rare in Latin America! We praise God for moving hearts in response to His call!**

WHEN GOD GIVES AND TAKES AWAY FOR HIS PURPOSE

In 2011, I was invited to join the "Free Soul" ministry team which serves the women and their children in the local prison in Quito. The ministry leader, Wanda, a missionary from the U.S. had served for more than 10 years and then retired upon our arrival here in 2014. Then Jen, a member of the team and a U.S. missionary, stepped into the leadership role. Then in early July, Jen shared the news with us that she and her husband have been called to serve on the coast to the victims of the 7.8 devastating earthquake. We were joyous that she and her husband are responding to God's call, but felt much sadness as we now do not have a leader for this ministry. At this time, there are now four Ecuadorian women and two N. American women (including myself) who serve. Elaine, the other non-Ecuadorian, teaches Bible studies in English to the foreign prisoners in Latacunga, Ecuador. I and the four Ecuadorian women provide Bible studies in Spanish to the female prisoners who are pregnant, or are mothers with small children in a smaller prison in Quito, Ecuador.



- Sondra, Rosy, (guest), Marianna, Elaine Jen (former ministry leader), (guest), Elena Elizabeth (not pictured) - Members of the Free Soul Ministry Team

Initially, the Ecuadorian women were shocked, sad, and very concerned because they saw Wanda, and now Jen, along with the N. American church as being the foundation of this ministry, especially because of its financial resources. The local Ecuadorian churches involved are not able to help because they are financially strained with the present situation in the local economy (due to the devastation in the coastal area from the recent earthquake). **But we talked and prayed together and they came to realize that we could hold bake sales and garage sales and that God will provide the rest. We agreed to move forward with the strength of the Holy Spirit and that we would trust in what He would do.**

The Ecuadorian women agreed to share the responsibility as equal members of a team, with God as our leader, and take turns teaching the Word. Then, SUDDENLY two things happened! - 1) A new director was brought into the prison program who is much more supportive of the ministry and says she will

do anything she can to help us minister to the women! We were also given an opportunity to minister to her in regard to her concerns about the negative attitudes of some of the women and her experiences with corruption in the system 2) The attendance at the Bible studies grew from 4-5 women to 23! Women are participating more, asking questions, and just last week, asked if they could meet together on the days we are not there, to read their Bibles together and pray together!!! **We have recently seen and felt the presence of God's Spirit fill the room as we watched faces and attitudes change while women from their own culture are sharing God's Word as well as their own personal stories of how God works in their lives. What a privilege to be a part of what God is doing within this prison!**

PERSEVERING THROUGH THE LOSSES

Because of God's past provision we recently were able to bless our friend Rosita with some money God provided with the sale of our home in 2014. When we put our house on the market, we told the Lord that whatever money He provided above the minimum price that we would accept from the buyer, we would use to help Rosita and her family. (They are still trying to pay off a huge unjust debt from 2011 when her husband was wrongly accused and imprisoned for a crime of which he was later found innocent by the courts).

We've been praying and waiting for God to show us when and how to present this gift to them in a way that is appropriate and not shameful in this culture. Then this July, Rosita told us that the school where she's been teaching Spanish for almost 20 years is closing. And because of the new government laws which require teachers to have a particular type of certification, without it Rosita cannot get a new teaching job. **Praise God she was recently accepted into a Catholic university which offers the classes she needs and is receiving a large grant!**



Patricio, Leisha, Sebastian, and Rosita

But she is still only able to pay a half of the balance of her tuition each semester. So, because of our close friendship, Rosita was able to humbly ask us if we could help her with a loan. We knew this was an answer to our prayers. **We agreed to pay the remaining portion of her tuition each semester until she completes her certification but on one condition - that she and her family would accept it as a gift from God and not a loan from us!** We've also talked to the director of our 2014 language school here in Carcelen, and Rosita may be able to get a part-time job teaching while attending the university and then possibly be employed by them when she graduates! **Praise God for providing a way to present God's gift to her in a way that is not shameful to her family and that will help her family the most!**

RE-DISCOVERING ANTONY

It's been 1½ years since we learned about Antony, a five-year old boy, orphaned after his parents and six-month old baby sister died in a car accident. His mother was a firefighter and good friend of Edisson, Darrell's firefighter buddy here in Ecuador. Antony only has a few living relatives, including a mentally ill grandmother, a grandfather and an unemployed aunt who has a child of her own who she is struggling to feed. Initially, Antony moved in with the parents of his classmates, moving from home to home every few weeks.

One year ago, we and Edisson, agreed to work with the family to see how we could help find a healthy environment for Antony. But then we lost contact with Edisson for more than a year. We later discovered, that he, being single, had been selected to fight the wildfires surrounding Quito for over a year, during which he and a fellow fire fighter almost lost their lives.

Having to wait so long to find help for Antony has been tough. Our emotional response was to rush in and rescue him from his unhealthy situation. We've prayed, and cried, and waited. **But God knows what is required and responds in His own way and in His own time.** Meanwhile, **Compassion International began renting a building on the Reach Beyond property.** One day, Darrell was asked to help them with an electrical problem in their building, during which he met some of the staff. **Darrell immediately inquired as to whether or not Antony would be a candidate for Compassion. Edison, Darrell, and I set up an appointment to meet with one of their staff.**

A lovely woman, Cecilia, listened intently as Edison explained the details. Antony is now back living with his mentally ill grandmother, grandfather, aunt, and cousin. The grandmother is doing better but the meager income made from the grandfather's part-time bricklaying job and the crops that the grandmother tries to grow are not enough to feed this family of five nor provide Antony with the school supplies and other basic necessities that he needs. **Despite the severe losses in his life, Antony, now six years old, is doing better in school and wants to be a firefighter, like his mom, when he grows up!**

Cecilia made some phone calls and visits with the family, explaining the program to them, and **the aunt has agreed to enroll Antony in a Compassion program nearby his village!** We are now waiting for the official authorization and for a number to be assigned to Antony's case. We are hoping this will occur in the next two weeks! When we are notified of the authorization, we will send you a special notice via email! When we shared the news about Antony over a year ago, a few firefighters from Wisconsin and at least one family from Woodlands Church indicated that they might be interested in sponsoring Antony. **Please pray that God will send the family of His choosing to be sponsors for this little boy!**



Cecilia, Sondra, Edison, and Darrell

THE NEXT TIME YOU ARE AT WAITING AT THE DMV...

Living in a different culture always brings about interesting challenges. We were told that most North Americans need to learn patience and flexibility when living in a Latin American culture. The people in Ecuador have different values than we do, one of which is that people are more important than tasks. So this is often why there is not much importance given to the details of paperwork, rules, and laws. Family is of the utmost importance, friendships are next, and the details of paperwork or tasks lies somewhere at the bottom of the spectrum in their everyday life. The Ecuadorians do not fret about tasks and schedules (which is why it is difficult to find calendars and day-planners in this country!) Most people simply do not plan things out beyond one week, and more often, not beyond today! **We'd like to share with you (in the 2nd PDF attachment at the end of your email) our recent experiences** trying to renew our VISAs and to register Darrell's motorcycle we purchased here in Ecuador. If you pull up a comfy chair and a cup of your favorite coffee or tea, **we know that you will enjoy reading and laughing hysterically along with us as we share with you a little bit of life here in Ecuador!**

READY OR NOT HERE THE TEAM COMES!

Well, eight weeks have passed, all the preparations have been made, and now we wait for the Woodlands team's arrival July 29th! We are full of anticipation to see God has planned for them, us, and the Dunamis and Zambiza ministries! **We thank all of you who have carried us thus far in prayer! We will write a special report with photos to send to you in August, after the team's return to the U.S!**

Darrell and Sondra Holden

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