

Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,

**My aunt would say “Go ahead and make your plans,
but God is probably laughing because He has plans of His own!”**

When God sets out to do something - - it always gets done! He doesn't NEED our help, but He WANTS it! It is through our participation that others witness His love and come to desire to know Who He is!

'God-Opportunities' for Sondra in the U.S. !

As soon as I knew I would have opportunities to share in the U.S., I asked God what He would have me share and His reply was, “I don't want you to ask people for financial support - - I will handle this. I want you to tell the people about the girls rescued from human trafficking and the families working in the garbage dump.”

I had scheduled two mission presentations; one at the Woodlands Church in Plover and one at the Woodlands Church in Wisconsin Rapids. **But soon after my arrival I received nine unexpected invitations to share what God was doing in Ecuador!** Some of the invitations included a 15-minute presentation at another local church, and several others opportunities in Bible study and home school groups. In each case, the original agreement was for a sharing time of 30 or 45 minutes but in most cases, because of the level of interest, I was encouraged to share the entire evening instead.

The two most exciting opportunities were being able to share with two Sunday school classes, grades 1-6, totaling 120 children at the Woodlands Church in Plover! I was asked to be prepared to speak for either 20, 15, and 10 minutes in case the children become impatient/disruptive and to not plan for a Q&A session. I had never spoken to this age group before, but **God gave Darrell and I some amazing ideas for sharing and I asked God to open their hearts to hear what He would want them to know.**



I shared photos I had taken of families living in the dump in 2005 when I went to Ecuador with Operation Christmas Child. I then showed a three-minute video about one man, one boy, and one God who changed everything for the families in the dump. **Click on link to watch video:** <https://youtu.be/DZGtCVU-P1M>

Afterward, we had a hands-on project where the children were challenged to find the most pieces of recycling, digging through garbage cans with their bare hands. I also shared photos of the Zambiza children to whom I help teach English. Finally, I gave them homework assignments to do with their parents through which **the children were challenged to PRAY, TELL OTHERS, and HELP.**

The results were amazing! At the end of 20 minutes, and much to the amazement of the Sunday school pastor and teachers, the children were still sitting quietly and were asking questions! A grandmother of a nine-year old Sunday school student, shared with me, that her grandson went home that Sunday saying, "Mom, we have to do something! It's not fair that those families live in a dump! We have to put them in a boat and bring them here!" I encouraged her to assure him that God knows about those families and that with the help of their prayers, God was going to take care of them. Then, **four weeks later, thanks to the Sunday school children and Woodlands Church, I left the U.S. with a large suitcase filled with school supplies, socks, toothpaste and toothbrushes for the 33 children in the before/after school program of the dump workers! Most importantly, there are children of Woodlands who are now praying for children, who live 3,000 miles away, in the community of Zambiza!**

One Family's Response to God's Call

"The plan" was to talk to less than a handful of people in Wisconsin about a special project for the Dunamis ministry. In July, a church team from the southern U.S. is scheduled to come to Quito to disassemble the workshop for the girls so that it can be moved to the new property. After a new foundation is built, another team is needed to re-assemble the building, soon thereafter, so the girls may continue learning work skills without much interruption. **"My plan"** was to talk to a few specific people at the Woodlands Plover Church. **God's plan** was that after sharing at the Woodlands Rapids Church presentation, the Galuk family would approach, asking many questions, and then commit to not only raise up a team but also the money for the new foundation to be built! **Praise be to God for stirring their hearts and for their obedience to His call!**



Moving Forward Despite Life's Challenges and The Enemy's Interference

We were warned, in the beginning, how important it is to be covered in prayer when involved in the Dunamis ministry. These young girls are reportedly "owned" by the mafia, gangs, and other crime rings. The enemy, Satan, does not want these girls rescued, especially spiritually, and what Dunamis helps them attain is a new life through spiritual freedom. Since our initial commitment, we've had our share of attacks from the enemy although we are not alone. Historically, all the ministry staff, workers, and volunteers have felt the arrows, especially Boris and Fernanda, the ministry directors. And now, since our church's commitment to help, the number of arrows increase.

But we know that we are covered by the blood of Jesus. We are his adopted children and under His protective care, and it is our goal that these girls will be the same. And, so, despite family challenges, doubt on the part of observers, and direct interference from the enemy, we move forward. **God is faithful. Our mustard seed of faith is all that we need. It is HE who grows that faith. And that growth occurs only because of HIS faithfulness!**

Generous Hearts and Compassionate Responses

I had left Ecuador with several dozen items, of tagua nut jewelry, crosses, and knitted items, handmade by the girls of Dunamis and the women of the Zambiza dump filling one large carry-on suitcase. Prayers were offered up that the Lord would put it on the hearts of people in the U.S. to give financial gifts for these items. I returned to Ecuador with an empty suitcase and close to \$1,000 of financial support for the girls of Dunamis and the women of Zambiza! Additional financial gifts were also given for the Dunamis ministry to help with expenses in moving to the new property and for the QFRC to purchase items needed at their facility! Join us in thanking the Lord for the generous hearts of those who responded!



'God-Opportunities' for Darrell in Ecuador !

In mid-March, Pablo, Darrell's firefighter friend, invited him to the huge 75th anniversary celebration of the Quito Metropolitan Fire District. The QMFD is comprised of 21 fire stations and approximately 1,000-1,500 fire department personnel. The event was held in the center part of the city where Darrell met Pablo after a one-hour bus ride. The event was open to the public and included music from the official fire department orchestra. Darrell was excited to see approximately 30 of the fire fighter officials sitting in an secured area. At the end of the evening, Darrell, already content to have witnessed the event, was then invited by Pablo to a graduation ceremony the next day which would take place in southern Quito. Pablo was one of 20 officers who would graduate and be promoted at this event.

The following day, Darrell rode with Ange'l, one of the other officers and his family, to the graduation. Upon arrival, Darrell observed two sitting areas outside of the facility with plastic chairs placed under tents for the general public. Thinking he would sit in one of those areas, he began to follow the family members to the seats but was intercepted by a female public relations officer for the event. He was then escorted to sit in a special area of wooden chairs with fancy coverings for honored guests.



Darrell was shocked to think that he was included in this group! But, there are many firefighter officials who now know that Darrell was a FD officer and that he volunteered for 20 years as a firefighter in the U.S.

Many have expressed feeling honored that he takes so much interest in their department !

Above this area were five important-looking chairs on which the five highest officials of the QMFD would soon sit. This included the commander and his four officers next-in-line. As Darrell waited, the 19 other special guests were seated, including four top FD officers from Guayaquil Ecuador, Madrid Spain, Barcelona Spain, and Costa Rica!



During the ceremony, the 20 honored guests, including Darrell, were instructed to participate by changing the bars on the uniform of the graduate that each one was assigned to.

After the ceremony, Darrell conversed with some of the firefighters and then all the guests of honor were escorted into the training center for an official tour of the facility. Also, Darrell and the other guests of honor were invited to accompany the five top QMFD officers and the four special guests from the other cities and countries for lunch at a local fancy restaurant. Darrell and the assistant to the top officer from Costa Rica were seated across the table from the commander, the highest official of the department! Fortunately, this assistant spoke some English and was able to help Darrell in his nervousness, when the commander spoke directly to him during lunch! Then, after the event, one of the commander's private security persons drove Darrell back to our home.

The following week, when Darrell was "hanging out" at the Carcelen Fire Dept. with the guys and gals, the district captain invited him to attend the district-wide 'Conference on Disaster Response' (which was, of course, in Spanish). The conference was held for two days. Approximately 400 firefighters and officers attended, along with several prominent business persons from the Quito area. At this conference he was able to mingle and converse with at least 10-15 FD personnel.

The staff at Reach Beyond, unaware of Darrell's invitations, were extremely surprised. DeNise, the missionary personnel director, responded by shaking her head and saying "I just don't believe it". She and others were impressed with the fact that God has provided opportunities for Darrell to meet with so many top officials of the Fire Dept. in the short amount of time that we have been here. When they discovered that he was invited to the conference they were thrilled to have him participate especially because of the topic being "Disaster Response" and his ministry position as Crisis Manager.

We praise God for these special opportunities

and look forward to what He has planned for Darrell

in his relationships with the QMFD!

Thank You for following along with us thus far!

**We hope that you will praise God with us for so many awesome opportunities
and read on through our April and May newsletters !**



Darrell and Sondra Holden

Serving with Ripe For Harvest - Partnering with Reach Beyond



in Ecuador, South America



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