



Holden Newsletter - Dec 2018

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

MAIN TOPICS **MAIN POINTS**
PRAYER REQUESTS / PRAISES



Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,

NEW VISAS

The process began back in January of 2018, in the U.S. with dozens of hours of research, paperwork, phone calls, mailings, and challenges with Sondra's fingerprints not being clear enough for acceptance. Since then we have had several appointments with a lawyer and visits to various offices in Ecuador.

Thanks to the Lord, we now have brand new visas. This was a new requirement of the Ecuadorian government which ended up costing us around us \$1,200 each! These are good for 2 years, at which time we intend to apply for permanent residential visas which will only need to be renewed every 5 years.

REACH BEYOND - HEADED IN A NEW DIRECTION

Reach Beyond has been blessed with the privilege of serving the people of Ecuador for more than 80 years. The ministry started in an old sheep shed with two men, a short-wave radio, a trombone, and a desire to share the Gospel with those who did not yet know Jesus. Through the years, they have expanded from short-wave to FM/AM, satellite, and, now, digital radio broad casting. They added other ministry outreaches such as hospitals, clinics, medical caravans, water purification projects, and other community development projects. **In recent years, the mission began 'reaching beyond' the borders of Ecuador to serve others globally. Now, in this new year, Reach Beyond will re-focus its mission with a new vision:**

- 1) to strive globally to reach 1,900 UPG's (unreached people groups) through radio ministries, medical outreaches, and community development projects
- 2) to continue to mentor pastors in Latin America
- 3) to continue to mentor missionaries-in-training in Latin America and, perhaps, globally

Surely the re-focus of a mission takes time, planning, adaptation, and much prayer. We've seen substantial changes here in Quito as Reach Beyond continues to turn many of its former ministries (the Voz Andes Quito and Voz Andes Oriente hospitals, their outlying clinics, and the community development program in Shell) over to Ecuadorian leadership. **Some are saddened by the changes, but we are hopeful and excited as the Lord re-shapes the mission for His purposes and the national leaders continue what Reach Beyond started decades ago. What does this mean for us as partners with Reach Beyond? Only the Lord knows, but so far there does not seem to be anything which will affect us serving here in Quito. Please keep us in your prayers as the Lord continues to guide and lead us.**

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

In October, the ladies of Reach Beyond and other partnering ministries shared a day together with Becky Harling - wife of Pastor Steve, Reach Beyond's new president - and her friend, Karen Cole. They opened their hearts, sharing their own personal life struggles and how God's goodness brought them through it all. **We praise God for this opportunity for soul-connection, refreshment, encouragement, and renewal.**



HEARTBREAKING NEWS

It is with much sadness that we share with you that as of January 1, 2019 we will no longer serve with the Dunamis ministry. For the past year, we have sent numerous updates and inquiries via email, text messages, and phone calls to Dunamis with no replies. We sought wise counsel and contacted leadership in partnering ministries who have also worked with the Dunamis ministry in the past. We were told that a lack of communication, leadership, and administrative skills has been a recurring issue which is why various volunteers, interns, missionary staff, and supporters have chosen to no longer support this ministry. We prayerfully decided to move forward despite the apparent break in communication and contacted the new program director of Dunamis to set up a mediation. Unfortunately, Boris would not agree to a mediation nor gave any explanation for his actions. **We have been advised, by the new program director, to re-distribute the cash donations we received while in the U.S. to another ministry of our choice. We are prayerfully listening for the Lord's guidance and will post this information in our March newsletter. Please continue to pray with us for Boris and his family, the ministry, and the girls rescued from human-trafficking that this ministry serves.**

VENEZUELAN REFUGEE CRISIS UPDATE / PAN DE VIDA MINISTRY

The encampments of refugees are gone. What was once an area covered with ropes, plastic, garbage (physical and human waste) dirty clothes, and suitcases is now fenced in with newly cultivated plants in an attempt to keep any future transients away. We were told the police took most of them away, with a few fleeing, refusing to move to any of the crowded shelters in the city. Many folks now comment on how nice the area looks; others, like me, feel the heartbreak still.

Where are they now? Obviously the shelters hold thousands of them, but thousands more are trying to survive on their own. Some are still living on the street like the young woman who sits all day and sleeps all night with her baby in front of the paint store here in Carcelen waiting for her husband to return with any prospect of work. Others are crowded into one-room rentals with as many as 15 or more people and are sharing one bathroom. Many walk miles door-to-door offering to do any type of work for any pay so they can collectively pay the rent and buy food. Others walk amid heavy traffic, stand on street corners, or ride the buses all day long, selling commercial and/or 'off-market' items to passengers and passers-by.

One such person was a young woman I met on the bus who was selling sweets. She said that she has only been here for two weeks and this was her first week working as a bus vendor. She spoke of her shame and embarrassment that she had to resort to doing this. Back in Venezuela, she once had a good job and her own house. Her family is still there and waiting for her to send enough money for them to join her. With a blushing face, and a quivering voice, she nervously went into her sales pitch. I didn't hear a

word she said. I couldn't only think of her struggle with humility. But I did hear another voice, my Lord's, telling me to refuse to buy her product yet give her a dollar none-the-less. As I slipped her the dollar coin I held her hand tightly telling her to keep her sweets to sell to someone else. She leaned over, kissed my cheek and said, "May God bless you for your generosity". I thought, "It's just a dollar. How I long to do more". As she made her way to the back door of the bus, the Lord spoke again reminding me of the invitations I had folded and tucked away in my tote-bag. I called out "Senora!" and motioned for her to come back toward me. With only seconds to step off the bus, she quickly reached for the paper and left. On the sidewalk she then quickly read the paper which said "Come and receive food and the Word of God – everything free!" The woman shouted to me "God bless you my friend!" as the bus sped away.

John 6:35 - "And Jesus said, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." My dollar may sustain her with a small portion of food, but at the Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) ministry she would be able to receive two free hot meals weekly along with Word of God and other fruitful opportunities and services. Yet, I felt a nudge to do more.

Not too long afterward, Darrell and I began talking more and more about the Venezuelan refugee crisis and it's affect on not only Ecuador but on our hearts. I sent out an email to approximately 20 other missionaries. As time passed and our cries to the Lord were heard, it became clear to us that by serving at Pan de Vida we could have the most impact on the lives of these desperate families. Since early November PDV has held four special programs for the refugees at which we've had the privilege of being able to serve.

Darrell has helped with set-up, tear-down, guiding the crowd, serving food, handing out supplies, and being 'Santa Claus' during the Christmas programs.

I help by greeting the beneficiaries when they come through the gate, guiding them to certain areas, chatting with them during their stay, listening to their stories, praying with and for them, and directing them to appropriate people and services.

During one of the programs I met a young woman with a toddler at her side who told me she is a few weeks pregnant. She lives with some relatives, all refugees, including her sister who is also pregnant. She wanted to know if she could get an appointment with the social worker to be referred for medical care. Also, just a few months ago, in Venezuela, her 1½ year old baby boy died from an infection he received from a scrape on his leg while playing. Many of the doctors have fled her country, clinics are closed, and there is no medicine, not even simple antibiotics which perhaps could have saved her baby's life. **As her tears flowed, I held back mine** as I left to search for someone to set her up with the appointment. I shared her story with them so that they might offer her counseling as well.

We thank the Lord for closing the door (at least for now) regarding our involvement with the Dunamis ministry and for opening another door to serve at Pan de Vida.

GREAT IS A MOTHER'S PAIN

REMEMBER GLADYS? She's one of the dozens of street vendors who sell Christmas trinkets each year in our community. I met her our first Christmas here in Carcelen in 2014. **Each year, I walk the streets looking to find where her tent is located.** Last year, we were away, attending a special program in California so I knew that this year I had to find her. I had given her a Bible and wanted to check up on how she was doing. I was excited for Darrell to finally meet her. We slowly walked through the crowded area hoping that I would recognize her. When I was almost to the end of the street and ready to give up, I thought perhaps the woman whose face was covered by the wide brim on her sun-visor could tell me where Gladys was. As I said, "Excuse me, Senora", the woman raised her head and exclaimed "My God!", jumped out of her chair, and threw her arms around me telling me how worried she was that we had left Ecuador and that she might never see me again. **Obviously Gladys had no trouble remembering me - one of a handful of 'gringitas' (white-skinned women) in Carcelen.**

She has been attending a Bible-teaching church for 4 years now and speaks with such joy about her Lord and Savior. My heart is so pleased. After much friendly conversation, she asked if we might be able to go with her to her son's house. She said he is very sick and in need of prayer for she knows that the Lord can heal him. **Her strong faith encourages me so.** We were unable to accompany her that day, but assured her that my friend Carmen and I would come one day that week to visit.

Her son's name is Oscar. He is 38 years old, married with 3 children, and now unemployed due to his illness. He has an infection that the doctors have not been able to control and which is eating away at his internal organs. They have told him to prepare to die. Gladys believes he has not yet accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. But she told me has begun reading the same Bible I gave her 4 years ago. Carmen and I stayed with him for over two hours sharing with him the healing balm of prayer and God's Word. When we left, he was physically worn out from our visit but smiling and hopeful. Since then, Carmen and her small women's group of prayer warriors from our church visited again. This time they shared the message of salvation with Oscar's wife, Sandra, who afterward made a decision to follow Christ. Carmen and the ladies have since tried to call Gladys for another visit with Oscar, but have not been able to reach her. **Christmas has come and gone again, and so has Gladys. We hope and pray with all our hearts, that her son, whenever his time to leave this earth comes, will be standing in the presence of the Lord. Please pray for Gladys, Oscar, Sandra, and sister Anita.**

REMEMBER SINTIA? She's the cleaning lady at HCJB Radio. A single mother with three children. And my friend. Her oldest, a daughter, now lives with her grandma and is attending classes at the free university. The youngest, Nicolas, has emotional disabilities. The middle child, Sebastian has struggled to stay away from the evil that invades the very poor neighborhood where he and his family live.

In November I received a frightening message from Sintia saying that she and her son Sebastian were going through VERY ugly times and to please pray for her and her son. She didn't say why. She almost never has minutes on her phone so I thought she was just being conservative. I went to my knees and prayed to my Lord who, I knew, knows all the details. As soon as I was able to meet with her, I could see the pain and distress in her face. **Sintia had found drugs in her son's room.** It turns out he's been smoking marijuana for 2 years and recently using cocaine. He was taken to a treatment center. He is 16.

I listened to Sintia tell me how she cried for five days and nights, how she wonders why he's using drugs when she has never drank nor smoked anything, how heartbroken she is that he doesn't want to live and refuses to eat, and how the professional staff will no longer let her visit until he is doing better. She told me that even though the government is paying for his 9 months of treatment, she has still has to pay for the medicines, dental care, and bus tickets to and from southern Ecuador to see him. The reality of her poverty hit me like a brick wall. I wanted to shed tears with her. Instead I only felt frustration and a bit of anger, wondering how in the world a single mother caring for three children and working three jobs would ever be able to handle such financial weight upon her shoulders. As a former single mother, I could already feel it upon my own. The Lord then gave me words not only for Sintia but for myself - that "He is faithful to provide, He is able to do the impossible, His heart breaks for her and her son, and He will not abandon them." - all truths I knew when I walked through my own valley with each of my two son's drug/alcohol addictions." **I told her I would share her pain now but would also one day share her joy for her son's healing, so that God can be glorified.**

Darrell and I talked and spent time in prayer, asking the Lord how we could be a part of her support network. In the following days, the Lord encouraged us to find and give to her: 1) 12 Step and Alanon info and resources, 2) Operation Christmas Child shoe box gifts and other gifts for her and her children, 3) and three boxes of food staples, fresh produce, frozen meat (including the turkey RB gave us this year). We also spoke with HCJB Radio's director who told us a collection would be taken to help Sintia with some of her extra expenses. Darrell and I are still praying to find a way to help her with the \$56 round trip bus tickets she needs each month to visit her son. We also spoke with Darrell's supervisor, who explained to us that Reach Beyond is also working with an architect in drawing up plans to help build a small apartment in part of Sintia's father's house so she can live there with her children and not have to pay much or any rent. **The Lord is already working in marvelous ways. Sebastian is now eating and Sintia was able to visit him just before Christmas. Please pray for Sebastian's healing and salvation and for Sintia's peace.**

THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME!

In just a few days, on the 17th of January, a team of 10 folks who will be arriving, late night, in Quito after a full day of travel from the frozen tundra of Wisconsin.

These eight men (one is the pastor and four are deacons of the church) plus two wives will spend nine days serving the Chango-Taipe family working alongside a small team of missionaries, workers, and volunteers from Ecuador. They will be helping to build not only a safer and more healthy home but, by the Lord's grace, will also build strong and healthy relationships with the family they are serving and the people in our community.

We are blessed, and the Lord is pleased, with these faithful servants who are willing to leave their comfort zone to 'go' and serve the Lord and his people across the ocean.



COMMUNITY CHURCH TEAM FROM STEVENS POINT WISCONSIN

(Back Row, Left to Right)

Brian & Laurie Smedegard - Jim Swanson - Pastor Chris Cooper - Tianna and Kevin Hamm

(Front Row, Left to Right)

Shane Westphal - Chad Gregory - Gabe Benson - Macky Mikunda

Please Pray:

- 1) For health, safety, and smooth logistics while traveling from Wisconsin to Florida to Ecuador
- 2) For health, safety, and smooth logistics while serving on site and while at social/cultural events
- 3) For health, safety, and smooth logistics for family members who are left at home in Wisconsin
- 4) For adaptation to the altitude, change in climate, culture, language, and traditions
- 5) For open minds, servant's hearts, conquered fears, and memorable experiences
- 6) For fruitful work, fruitful relationships, and bonding with each other and the Ecuadorian people
- 7) For spiritual awakening, lasting fruit, and growth within Community Church upon return

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Praise for the Blessing Of:

Our New Ecuadorian Grandson! : Aidan, a boy, born Sept 29, to our sponsor son Christian (and Katie)
Our Ecuadorian Grandson: Jhoan (6) son of our sponsor daughter Wendy (and David)
Our Ecuadorian Grandaughter: Scarlet (4) daughter of our sponsor son, David (and Tonya)

Prayer for Our:

Health Concerns: (Darrell) tendinitis in shoulder and herniated disks in neck (22 PT sessions total)
(Sondra) residual symptoms from dog bite and fall (14 PT sessions total)
Physical, Mental, Emotional Challenges: Noise from landlords major construction project in our building
Busy schedule during the past eight weeks.
Need For Relaxation, Restoration, Renewal: To set aside one weekend monthly for just the two of us
to do something refreshing and relaxing

Darrell and Sondra Holden

Missionaries of -



Partnering with -



in Ecuador, South America

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