



MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

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Vacation Bible School 2010

"What's going on at the gringo (white people) house?" I was asked by various children as I walked home one day.

"Why, what have you seen?" I asked.

"There's a huge tent in their yard!"

"Next week is vacation Bible school," I told them.

"There will be lots of fun activities." After I invited them to come and see what it's all about, they skipped off to tell their friends.

This was the second year the El Chal Church held vacation Bible school. It was a tremendous opportunity to make contact with the community children and train the Guatemalan church members how to teach a class. With 234 children, it took a tremendous amount of organization to make things run smoothly. Melanie Mummert spearheaded the whole effort. From the food to the craft projects, she had it all figured out.

The day began as teachers gathered around 8:00 for a few moments of prayer and final instructions. The school gate opened at 8:30 and began to allow the excited children to enter and find their

class. Each teacher was responsible for their own students before general assembly; playing games, coloring, and building relationships.

General assembly happened under the great big tent. Each day the mighty army under the tent would respond to our leader with a hearty good morning. After singing our theme song "I'm Going on the Good News Train," we practiced our memory work. Prayer time was a great opportunity to teach them reverence to God. Imagine trying to get 200 town children to fold their hands, close their eyes, and pray. It can be done, not perfectly by any means, but satisfactorily.

Each class had the same lesson, applied by each teacher to their appropriate age group. Class and craft lasted for about 1½ hours and each class was served a snack before dismissing by 11:00 a.m. We had a total of eight classes and fifteen teachers, eight of whom were Guatemalans. Some of the classes averaged forty students.

A highlight for me was listening to Teresa, a 17-year-old teacher, give her testimony to the 12- and 13-year-old girls. The girls listened intently as she told how she was very lost at the age of 15, how she accepted Christ, and the peace and forgiveness she has.

Another boy who has a reputation for stealing and fighting also attended Bible School. He was always one of the first children waiting at the gate. He came every day, crying for love and acceptance. When

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Smiling faces were a common sight during the Bible school effort.



234 children attended the vacation Bible school in El Chal.



EDITORIAL

by Brian Yoder

Death and the Coming Dawn

Rain dripped from the ragged sky, adding to the misery of the little group in the cemetery. Water stood six inches deep in the concrete alley between the walls of the dead. As they neared the place, they met fresh disappointment. The funeral home had rushed its work. The casket bearing their grandfather's remains had already been sealed into its niche, with neither prayer nor song. One by one, they stepped gingerly through the water to pay their final respects before the fresh square of plaster in the wall and turned to go . . . bearing a new weight of sorrow back to their homes across Guatemala.

I often linger in graveyards. Not that I enjoy morbidity, but because there are certain thoughts and curiosities that are best processed there. And so I stayed a little longer, just to look, and think. On the thick walls that held the dead were names and dates, some inscribed in marble, others on homemade markers. One grave held a notice: "This niche's rent must be paid by December, or it will be vacated." In other words, someone's loved one was destined for the common bone box.

Other funeral parties came and went, following caskets down dilapidated alleys to the prescribed hole in the wall. One by one, each group cemented into a common wall their lifetime of memories and gladness, and turned to face the future without a father, a wife, or a son. And it wrenched at my heart, because I know what it's like.

Death is man's worst enemy. Graveyards were not meant to be. Men were created to live, not die. Children were born to laugh, and run, and grow, not to lie silently in a box. To see a once-lovely person crumpled into a lifeless heap is like a sacrilege and a blasphemy, and men recoil from that which never should have been.

Like nothing else, death adds to human sadness. It is as if every grave in the cemetery sends a ripple of sadness back into society, and a million ripples form a storm of waves that continually lash at the human heart. We mourn for what we have lost, we fear separation and sadness to come, and we feebly protect that which we know we can never keep. And we are right to mourn, for death was not the intent of God. Death is the power of a conquering enemy,

under whose grip the whole world is subdued.

Even Jesus felt it. As He stood at Lazarus' tomb, He felt the anguish of His friends, He saw the desecration that was never meant to be, and a tidal wave of sadness flooded His own soul. Standing inside His own creation, He felt it groaning and travailing in pain under this unbearable burden of death, and Jesus wept along with the weeping world.

Death was not God's plan, but sin caused it to pass upon all of creation. Enoch and Elijah escaped earth without it, but for the rest of us, death is the only way out of a world gone haywire. And although the Christian still dreads and mourns it, there is a power beyond death that affords him a great deal of hope.

The hope of eternal life is the hub of the Christian faith. Jesus' resurrection proves our resurrection, Paul assured the early church. Just as Adam's sin brought death, Jesus' righteousness brings life. As a living plant springs from a dying seed, so an amazing life will be brought from the heartbreak in the graveyard. And the Christian yearns for a life uninterrupted by dying, unchallenged by age, just as life was meant to be. He longs for the final triumph, when Christ will destroy death itself.

The world is nervous about its future, and with good reason. Tension between the Koreas. An atomic Iran. The rise of leftist idealism in the Americas. A U.S. that borrows forty cents for every dollar it spends. Evil gone mad. One wonders what spark will ignite the world.

But while we groan under the weight of what could be, we rejoice in the reality of what will be. For what *could* be is awful to imagine, but what *will* be makes the worst possibility seem bearable. And though we "love not our lives unto the death," we live in the glow of Rev. 21:4: "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying."

Death still rules on planet Earth, and in 2011, many will meet the Last Enemy before they meet the Eternal Friend. And though that Enemy win, his victory is hollow and his fury short. Weep if you must, but remember that death is temporary, and life is forever. And every child of faith can deal with death, because he truly believes in life.

American Workers' Meeting Report

Welcome to the American Workers' Meeting, where the English language reigns and *Café Americano* is brewed nonstop throughout the day. Because of the wide reaches of M.A.M in Guatemala, missionaries can quickly become isolated in their own little corners—unaware of what is happening in the lives of their fellow missionaries. The workers' meeting is a tool the mission uses to combat this problem. Not only does it provide a place of rest from daily mission life, but it allows each one of us to build friendships and to find strength in others.

Tuesday, November 30th, the North American workers arrived in El Chal to fellowship over supper and over mugs of that aforementioned coffee. Then the older folks settled into their chairs to tell tall missionary tales, while the youth played volleyball.

The next morning everyone piled into the school bus and a truck and headed to a beautiful waterfall an hour from El Chal. Together, we spent the better part of Wednesday enjoying God's beautiful creation around (and in) the falls. Ross talked about Heaven and how Jesus will be the key figure there—the One to whom we should be looking forward to above any other joy Heaven may provide! We were all blessed.

Then it started to rain. While the older folks packed up to go home as planned, the youth scratched their youthful heads and looked at the sky—hoping the weather might break so they could camp as planned. Finally, most of the youth decided that they could bear the weather and camp anyway.



The single fellows and girls at the missionary retreat.

And so, though it continued to rain, the youth did their swimming and roasted their hotdogs, and were generally pleased that they had decided to

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Pastor of the Month



Rafael Segura accepted the Lord in El Chal in 1977. When the Americans returned to the States during the civil violence, he helped with the leadership of the church in El Chal until he was forced out in 1982. Help was needed in La Sorpresa, and he and Blanca moved there and served for eight years. During that time, he made regular trips to Pital to help establish another church.

From La Sorpresa, Rafael moved to Mixcolajá, where he served for another eight years. When his family encountered difficulties, he served in Porvenir for almost four years before he moved to Los Achiotes, where he has now lived and served for eight years.

In May 2010 Rafael's wife Blanca

passed away, leaving Rafael alone. The church built a small room adjacent to the chapel in Los Achiotes for Rafael to live in. He is still active in church work, and has travelled more frequently for revivals and special meetings.

Life in the ministry is not easy for a lonely man like Rafael. "When I sit down to study, sometimes I cry all over my notebook, and I don't even care," he told me. "I don't know if I'll ever get over it."

The church in Los Achiotes is small, and help is scarce. Rafael feels the weight of responsibility, and memories of his wife are fresh in his mind. Please pray that God would be Rafael's comfort and strength, vision and peace.

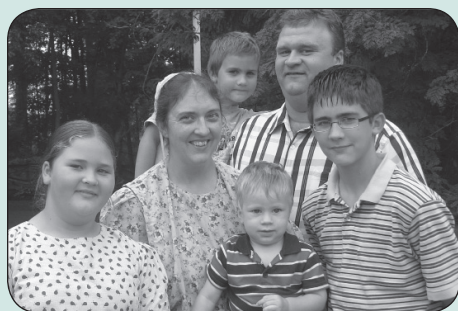
New Personnel

Ervin and Erma Horst, from Grace Church in New Hamburg, Canada, are our very welcome houseparents. They arrived in early November, after a series of temporary houseparents. Ervin and Erma plan to stay until next spring. The search for their replacements is well underway.



Ervin and Erma Horst
are our new houseparents.

Steve and Valerie Diefenbacher, from the Bethel church in Millbank, Canada, are our newest missionary family. After spending six weeks in Spanish school, they moved to Santa Rosita in mid-December, where they'll serve as houseparents to the clinic staff. They will also serve as "missionaries-in-training" while they work beside Jeff Yoders. Their future might include an extended time in Santa Rosita, or a transfer to another outreach in the future.



Steve and Valerie Diefenbacher are
our newest missionary family.

Vacation Bible School . . . continued

asked if he was having a good day, his reply was *a very good day!*

Children came from near and from far. Some came out of curiosity, and others because they knew what would happen and they wanted to be a part of it. Some came for the food and some came for the crafts. Some came to escape their home; others came because their parents wanted someone to teach

their child Biblical principles. All came with empty hands and all left with something to take home, if not in their hands, then in their heart and mind.

The other day, as I was walking along the main road in El Chal, I heard voices from the depths of a leaf-covered tree singing, "I'm Going on the Good News Train!" I hope the Bible truths they learned that week will help them choose to climb aboard the Gospel train.

Waneda Erb

American Workers' Meeting Report . . . continued

remain, despite the fact that they and their fire were getting wet.

Thursday dawned as rainy as the night before. The youth packed up under the light rain, loaded the two trucks, and made the wet and muddy ride back to El Chal in time to eat brunch with those who had sensibly opted for real beds.

The rest of the day was filled with various activities. There was an hour of singing, a devotional by Jeff Yoder, a photo presentation of life in Santa Rosita, and a photo presentation about El Chal.

Soon after supper the headquarters folks began their long trek toward the city. The women left for a ladies' activity, while the men lounged lazily in the living area and laughed at random intervals. After some games with the children, we called it a night—and thus the workers' meeting ended.

To those of you who planned this workers' meeting, cooked the food, and made things happen, we want to thank you for the hospitality, the fellowship, the good food, and the coffee. American Workers' Meeting . . . good to the last drop!

Nathan L. Yoder

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