



# MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

## Porvenir

"Build us a church house and there will be members." These words of faith came from brother Pedro's mouth as he considered the possibility that the tiny work in Porvenir would be closed. The work had been started after Pedro and his wife Amanda had returned from El Chal, where they had first made contact with the Mennonites. More than eight years went by before the first contact was made in Porvenir, and when the missionaries saw interest there, they began occasionally holding services in the area. Later a family moved there to provide leadership. The exact dates are uncertain, but a number of years went by and Pedro and Amanda were the only local people who attended faithfully.

The mission decided that perhaps it was time to focus on other areas where there was more interest; this couple would have to attend an established congregation an hour away.

Brother Rafael Segura was the national pastor living in the nearby town of Pasaco at the time. He worked on a nearby farm along with a family of caretakers. One day, the caretaker's daughter had a terrible headache and came to him, asking him to pray for her. He asked her if she would like to accept Christ and become a member of the church. She did. They knelt and prayed, and this young lady found the Lord.

Shortly after, her sister made the same confession of faith; before long, another did the same. Now five people were not only attending services but interested in becoming part of the church, all very shortly after the mission began to consider closing the work.

Needless to say, the work did not close; rather it began to grow steadily.

There was no road up to the tiny village of Porvenir from Pasaco in those early days. Sometimes Harold Kauffman would land the airplane on a

soccer field, still an hour's walk away. As time went on, a road was built.

The mission built a small wooden chapel, which was later replaced with a block structure. Members were added. Instruction classes frequently began with nearly a dozen individuals, but often a number would drop out before taking the step of baptism.

Many fell away, but some remained true. Pedro and his wife Amanda are now great-grandparents, but have continued on.

Many women found Christ and joined the church, but their husbands either had no desire for Christian-

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The church family in Porvenir.



# EDITORIAL

*Craig Martin*

## Calluses for the Kingdom

Recently I read the following story, which made me consider and examine my own life. After only a month of Christian life, nearly all of it upon a sick bed, a young man of nearly thirty years old lay dying. Suddenly a look of sadness crossed his face, and, to the query of a friend, he exclaimed, “No, I am not afraid—Jesus saves me now—but, oh, must I go and empty handed?”

I ponder this account and wonder: what have I to bring the Lord if I should be called before Him at this very moment? Our Lord declares, “The harvest truly is plenteous!” Dare I come into His sacred presence empty handed? It is my desire to come before our Lord with scarred and callused hands from working in the Master’s fields and present to Him the fruits of His harvest.

In my time of service in Guatemala, I’ve been asked various times by individuals interested in the work of Mennonite Air Missions: “What is the biggest need in the church in Guatemala?” I reply, “One of the biggest needs that I see is for men and ladies who will humbly give of their time and energy to fast and pray.”

Sure, a mission needs money to operate and the generous financial contributions are much appreciated and are an answer to prayer. Yes, the missionaries are greatly cheered when they receive a gift or a note of encouragement. May God richly reward those who have made that their mission. But more than money and more than gifts, there is a need for footmen to fight on the front lines alongside our dear brethren, some of whom are nearly to the point of laying down the fight. This includes aging pastors who find it difficult to carry the responsibilities they carried in their younger years. This includes the tired, discouraged missionary; who will share his load? This includes congregations that need a pastor to lovingly and humbly lead the flock, but there is no one to fill the position. Can we not hear the voice of the Lord cry out? “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

It is easy to be as the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who in Numbers 23 said to Moses, “Let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession and bring us not over Jordan,” because “they saw that the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead was a land suitable for cattle,” and these two tribes had a very great multitude of cattle. They preferred the ease and comfort of that land, which had already been conquered instead of crossing over the river of Jordan to help their brethren

conquer the promised land.

Moses, being the wise leader that he was, made them see the error of their thinking and told them that, if they would inhabit this land, it was needful for them to first take up arms and go into battle beside the rest of God’s chosen ones until they, too, had obtained the victory. And Moses warned them, “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.”

Are you and I guilty of sinning before the Lord because of our idleness? Is it not because of our neglect to preach the Gospel of salvation that souls are dying on every side without hope, having never heard the Good News? Are we like the tribes of Reuben and Gad, content with the comfort and ease of where we are, for “it is a land of cattle, and we have cattle”?

Let us examine our hands. Are there signs on them of hard labor in our Lord’s field, or are they soft, never having toiled long to bring in the sheaves? Have we gone to battle alongside our brethren? What sacrifice have you made today so that more souls would come to Christ? What have you done to assist those on the “other side of Jordan” with their struggle? Jesus gave up His life for us; let us give up ours for Him!

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their best to their guests. They are used to living with less than we are, and yet they are far more contented than most North Americans. If they have plenty, they are more than willing to share with one another. They don’t make their lives overly hectic with work, always striving to make more money to put into a savings account to later buy more things. If they have extra, they often help people who need it more than they themselves do.

How about us? Are we stashing money in a savings account for ourselves, or are we willing to help people with the extra that we have? Do we care for our elderly, widows, and sick, like we should? Are we counting the blessings of being born in a land of plenty, or do we recognize that God has blessed us with abundance so that we can help others? Are you willing to use what God has blessed you with to make a difference for His kingdom?

*The WATER team*

## Porvenir . . . continued

ity or else began the Christian life and fell away. The church had faithful members, but the majority of them were women, which naturally left a great need for spiritual men to be leaders within the church. Because of this, the Porvenir church has always had a missionary or national pastor from another area in leadership, which has led to many leadership changes. At least eight brethren have been in charge over the last twenty-five years, four of whom were North American missionaries.

Change in leadership is hard. It causes stress and uncertainty. The sisters in the church worry that the missionary will leave and wonder who will come to take his place. Perhaps someone they don't even know? Pray that God would raise up one faithful man in this church who could be ordained pastor.

Today the church has nine members, and we are currently holding instruction class with four individuals. Pray for them; it is a big change to leave the world and learn a new way of life. Many in the past have given up

when they realized discipleship means forsaking all to follow Christ. We pray that these four would finish the class with a firm determination to follow Christ regardless of the cost and would join the church with joyful dedication to the end.

Pray for the salvation of the spouses of those who are faithful members. Pedro and Amanda, the original couple, are still the only couple who are both faithful members.

And thank you for your prayers. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." God can change the hearts of youth; He can bring men to broken repentance. He can provide a pastor. He can keep the children from going out into the world and leaving the principles of Scripture. For Him it is simple, but He wants you to pray. He wants you to intercede for souls so that they will respond to His call.

And may God bless you richly for the investment that you are making in His work.

## Rubén's Testimony

*Rubén is the son of José Benito, the bishop in San Bartolomé. After beginning a life of sin that nearly killed him, he found a new life and the peace of God. This is his testimony.*

I was born and grew up in a Christian home. Since I was little, I dreamed of being a great missionary; I read history books of missionaries sacrificing their lives so that others could find salvation. I wanted to be one of them.

When I reached adolescence, I began to associate with bad friends. I withdrew myself from the church and began to do whatever my friends did.

When I was fourteen, they taught me to smoke. I smoked every day. After some time, I no longer went out in the street to smoke, but I smoked in secret. I tried to cover up what I was doing and show my parents that I was a good son.

My dreams changed. I wanted to be a great businessman—someone successful. Also, being a politician attracted my attention. But I could not attain any of this while living in my parents' house. I longed for the day when I could leave my home and be free—when I could do what I wanted.

The years went past, and I began to be very rebellious. When I turned eighteen, I thought that the time had finally come to begin to realize my dreams.

I began to go out at night with my friends, and we went to the parties. One night a friend invited me to go with him to a bar, and I accepted the invitation. After a while he told me to try a drink. Then he insisted. Finally, I did. I drank until I was drunk.

After that night, going out to drink became an every-night habit.

I worked on the farm for my dad in the daytime, and at night I would leave to drink. I began to be overtaken by the addiction; I could not pass one night without drinking. I lost control; the alcohol was controlling me. Sometimes my friends would find me lying in the street and have to take me home; other times my sisters would come for me.

I began to miss work because of spending complete nights without sleeping. The parties and the alcohol were destroying my life. I watched my parents suffer when they saw me like this. I continued to sink deeper in sin. I wanted to escape, but it was too late; its chains had me bound.

One day I drank too much. I became extremely intoxicated to the point I could hardly breathe. My brother came along and saw me lying in front of the bar. He took me to the emergency room at the medical clinic in the village, and I only woke up when we were leaving. I could rationalize a bit by then and asked my mom why we were there and were leaving. My mom replied with tears in her eyes, "You almost died."

For the first time since I had begun drinking, I thought on what I was doing. Where would I be right now if God had called me to give an account before Him? It scared me to think about it, and I promised to never drink again.

But after a few days I was back to drinking. This time I almost wrecked my dad's car. A missionary

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## Ruben's Testimony . . . continued

family offered to help me so that I could leave the village and my friends. I was tired of my life, and I accepted the invitation for a few weeks.

I went with this family, and they helped me spiritually. I began to desire the peace that they enjoyed. Several months went by and I was invited to the Central American Ministers meetings. The second evening before the service, the preacher came over to greet

me. He invited me to make things right with God, for which I felt a very great need. I wanted to have peace. I surrendered my life to God.

Jesus, with His grace, reached out and saved me from a life that was surely going to be lost. I saw the power of God working in my life. It gave me strength to have victory in my spiritual life. Now I rejoice in the peace that only the children of God can enjoy.

I praise and bless the name of our Creator.

*José Rubén Benito Ramírez*

## WATER

We, the WATER team from SMBI, were welcomed to The Land of Eternal Spring and Guatemala City by the warmth of the long-term missionaries serving there. We appreciated how thought-out and planned our stay was. It had the perfect combination of working beside the missionaries and seeing and experiencing the country and culture.

We were asked to write an essay on what we saw and learned during our five-week stay in Guatemala. We hope you as readers will benefit from what God has taught us during our stay.

Trust and faith were two big things all of us grew in. Trust in each other as a team, trust in bus drivers (buses can be rather frightening), but most of all, trust in God to protect us. All of us felt that our faith was tested, but because God is almighty, it was also strengthened.

God performed an especially meaningful miracle for us while we were staying in Santa Rosita. Before going there, we were warned about the many poisonous snakes. The missionary couple serving there had snakes in their house on different occasions. Like most girls, we were a little intimidated by this report. We prayed about it, and God in His love protected us. We saw only one snake during our entire stay, and it was really small. We did see lots of rats and lizards in the house though. I guess God wanted to stretch us a little.

While in Santa Rosita, the way Daniel Eby interacted with the people stood out to us. He was actually like one of them. He had fun with them, and they all looked up to him. He never said no to anyone that asked for his help, and he and his wife Dora were always ready to serve.



**2016 WATER team: Lillian Hershberger, Mariana Bortrager, Selena Peters, and Alisha Wenger.**

During our stay in Guatemala, we visited a total of seven churches. It was sad to see how many of these churches were without a pastor, and it seemed that wherever we went, they could have used more pastors. Even the churches that had a pastor had only one. What if our churches in the States all just had one pastor?

It gave us a new awareness and appreciation for the pastors we have, to pray for and encourage them. Not only for those in our churches in the States, but also those working for God's kingdom in other countries.

There is also much that can be learned from the Guatemalans. The way they show respect to one another was a huge thing. This is something that is seemingly being lost in our North American culture. Everyone greets each other on the streets, and they genuinely care about the person they are greeting. Everyone is very hospitable and they always serve

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