



# MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" Psalm 126:5.

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## Can You Find My Parents?



**Waneda Erb and a child from El Chal.**

The carefully held-in scream suddenly broke through my pinched lips and joined my sisters' screams as we were lifted high off the ground. I clung to my sister's hand as she clutched the edge of the backhoe's loader. Inside the cab our dad cautiously operated the levers. Eventually we got enough nerve to let go and wave to our mom, who was standing far below capturing the moment on camera.

It was the perfect ending to a very normal day. It was summer, which meant picking strawberries for most of the morning. We spent our afternoons playing with our dolls, waiting for Dad to come home from work, always hoping that tonight he would play baseball with us. I have many sweet memories of my childhood innocence. Happiness, contentment, and love swirled all around us.

Normal. What is a normal childhood, anyway? For years, I thought my childhood was normal. My

parents loved us and gave my sisters and me a balanced life of hard work and vacation. Not until I grew up and moved to another country did I realize just how abnormal my childhood really was.

Since arriving in Guatemala, I have observed many sad and lost children. I have listened to their hearts, loved them, hugged them, laughed with them, and cried with and for them.

My fingers ache to type out the sad stories of the children I work with and the many questions I have about their sad little lives, their childhood innocence lost because of selfish choices by their parents.



**56% of our school children come from broken homes.**

A quick survey of the students in our school gives us the startling statistic that 44% have both real parents living with them. The remaining 56% of the students are a heart-rending assortment of broken homes. Of these, a disturbing 42% are broken because one or both parents are either working in the States or in another part of the country. 9% of these families have lost their dad to murder or death by some other means. Although the remaining percentage may be small, it says nothing about the loneliness children feel for an absent parent, or the shame they feel when they can't say who their dad is.

Last fall as I was flipping through hundreds of student photos on my computer, I felt like I could see into their little hearts through their big black eyes. Memories of the little pieces of their lives which they entrusted to us flooded my heart, and I wished to speak to the absent parents. I wanted them to see a

*(continued on page 3)*



**Emotional holes sometimes hide behind smiling faces.**



# EDITORIAL

by Mark Gingerich

## All Hands on Deck

The title refers to what was shouted to the mates on ship, when a storm arose in the sea, back in the olden days. There was danger to many lives. "All hands on deck!" was the call for each sailor to take his part: to lighten the load, to lower the anchor and the sail, to do whatever could be done to save the ship.

Today we live in a world buffeted and tossed by economic collapse, wars, upheavals against governments, moral decay, and Christians who desert the faith for the "deceitfulness of riches" and the seduction of the so-called "new age."

Jesus' words in Matthew 9:37-38 continue to challenge us today: *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The world in Jesus' day was a needy field. People in that time were hungry for something other than food; although no doubt many didn't know for what they were hungry. There were many unbelievers, false prophets, and people in bondage to the occult. On one hand were the self-righteous Pharisees, and on the other was worldliness and materialism.

If the above statements were true in Jesus' day, how much more are they true today? World population has multiplied many times over since then. According to some estimates, the world population in Jesus' day was somewhere around two hundred million. By A.D. 1500 it had reached five hundred million. By 1804 it was one billion. In 1927—two billion. By the 1960's it was three billion, and by 1975 it was four billion. Today the count is over seven billion, and it has been estimated that it could be at sixteen billion by 2027. Will the world stand that long?

These statistics alone help us to realize how the need has increased. Has the ratio of Bible-believing Christians to the number of unbelievers increased on the side of Christianity? Even if the ratio would have remained the same in that time frame, Christians overall would have failed in their calling to win souls for Christ.

And yet, there are reports and estimates that in China, with its approximate 1.35 billions, people are coming to Christ at the rate of 20,000 to 30,000 per day! It must be that people there are hungry for the Gospel. They must be coming to the conclusion that their society and their government programs do not have the answers for man's most urgent need—that of a Saviour and Eternal Life. The Chinese believers have found, no doubt, that the hunger and thirst for righteousness can only be filled and satisfied by Christ alone.

How do we respond to the needs around us? We have the information, the tools and the opportunities to share the Good News of salvation. Here in Guate-

mala, by God's grace and power, we put forth effort to build the Kingdom of God and to shine as lights in our world.

A call has come for my wife and me to serve in Antabamba, Peru for one year. We go with the goal and purpose of sharing the gospel to many who are yet unreached. There are a number of towns and villages in close proximity to Antabamba that have almost no knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ.

We are not all called to go to some far-off place to be a light. Where you live, work, and serve is your opportunity to be a light and a witness for Christ. As Christians, we are called to represent Christ to the many so-called civilized people who do not know the way of salvation. Many don't care to know. But we may well be surprised at how many would respond, if the Way was presented to them.

*Swiftly we're turning life's daily pages, Swiftly the hours are changing to years;*

*How are we using God's golden moments? Shall we reap glory, shall we reap tears?*

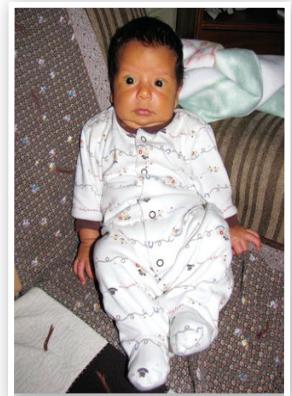
*Millions are groping without the Gospel, Quickly they'll reach Eternity's night;*

*Shall we sit idly as they rush onward? Haste, let us hold up Christ the true Light.*

*Into our hands the Gospel is given, Into our hands is given the Light,*

*Haste, let us carry God's precious message, guiding the erring back to the right.*

**Duane Levi Eby was born to Daniel and Dora Eby on July 7, 2013.**



## NOTE

Victor Ovalle's wife Anita has faced knee surgery and medical complications that will total nearly \$30,000.00. Donations toward her medical expenses can be sent to the MAM treasurer, Amos Hurst. Donations in excess of the medical need will go towards MAM operating costs.



## Can You Find My Parents . . . continued

little bit of *this* side of the story; to tell them about the holes I see in their children's lives. I wanted them to know just how precious their child really is, not only to us, but to their Creator. These little children aren't like toys and dishes to be left here and there. They have souls; souls that need nurturing as they grow to serve God as He intended.

The first time that a student at the Tree of Life School in El Chal, where I work, begged me to be her mother, I was startled. I couldn't imagine why they wouldn't want their real mother. When it continued to happen, I began to understand a little how they feel. They want more than a voice over a telephone. They want more than the sparkling new shoes and the latest computers that their parents send them from the States. They want someone whom they can touch; someone who will listen to their fears and who will show them in action what it means to love.

An eleven-year-old girl whose mother had gone to the States ten years before was one who begged me to be her mom. In the course of the conversation, I asked her if she remembers her mother. "No," she answered.

"How do you know you miss her if you don't remember her?" I asked.

"I don't know," she shrugged. "I just do."

Holes. Big holes. Unexplainable holes.

Knowing that many children had absent parents, I used to naively explain to the children that God is like a father. The skeptical looks on their faces told me that something didn't make sense. Finally one boy put it into words. "That's only in *your* country," he said. Slightly horrified, I began to rethink how I could tell them of God's great love.

Let's try again. God is NOT like your father. God IS present. Always. God LOVES you. Always.

But what about the other 44% of children who live with both parents? I wish I could say they all live happily ever after. Some do, and how we love to see responsible, secure children!

But the others . . . Well, we could split them into statistics too, but they are more than statistics. They are the brown-skinned hugs that I feel every day. They are the gelled black hair that I pat. They are the bright black eyes that look up to me as they excitedly tell me that they got 100% on the quiz the day before.

They may have two parents, but as the first grader told his teacher, "My dad doesn't love my brother or me. He just loves our little sister."

Would you feel respected by your mom if she degradingly called you "Negro" (black) because of the color of your skin? Would you feel like confiding in your dad if he drunkenly tried to hug one of the school staff to show his appreciation for what we are doing for his children?

How would you feel if your mom cared for you, but just materially? She would leave enough money for you to buy your food, but if you wanted to talk to her, you would need to get up really early or stay up late until she came home from work.

Children are crying all over the world. They are losing their childhood innocence because their parents aren't around to protect them. They want parents who spell love like T-I-M-E, not like M-O-N-E-Y. **Money** doesn't buy a child security, happiness, or innocence.

Now I realize that I had an abnormal childhood. I had two parents who lived together and loved each other and their six daughters. How blessed I am! I thank God and my parents for giving me an abnormal, wonderful childhood.

Will you join us in praying for the children who live a normal life?

—Waneda Erb

## The Reinstatement of José Benito

José Benito Xotoy, for years a pastor and bishop of the *Monte de los Olivos* church in San Bartolome, has been reinstated to the office of bishop for the congregation there.

Several years ago, because of a wayward son in the home, José felt he was no longer qualified to serve in the ministry and asked to step down. Brothers Victor Ovalle, Harold Kauffman, and Mark Gingerich have given assistance there as needed.

About a year ago, when the matter of the wayward son was no longer an issue, José was restored once again as pastor.

Recently the MAM board recommended that Brother José be restored once again as bishop. The matter was discussed in a recent bishops' meeting, and finding that Brother José's personal life and testimony were intact, his reinstatement was approved. And although he feels unworthy, who of us is worthy of what God has done for us?

On Saturday, August 3, Harold Kauffman and Mark Gingerich traveled to San Bartolome, where José was reinstated as bishop on Sunday. We rejoice that once

again God has provided for the leadership needs of that congregation.

—Mark Gingerich



**José and wife Tiburcia, ready to give full service to the church again.**

# Water Team, 2013

*From July 2 through August 1, we were privileged to have a team of three girls from SMBI's WATER program (World Awareness Training in Evangelistic Revival) with us. We enjoyed their zeal and enthusiasm to step out of their comfort zone and get involved in different aspects of the work. You can get a glimpse of their time here in the brief summaries they have written.*

God is so amazing! I truly stand in awe of Him as I look back over the past few months, even years of my life. He definitely is teaching me to wait on Him and works wonders in His time.

I've been very blessed during this past month in Guatemala. I can't thank God enough for all He taught me through our experiences and for His protection even through sickness! I enjoyed every place we went: Antigua for three days of Spanish school, El Chal for ten days, Pasaco for two days, Oratorio for three days, and of course Guatemala City in between.

It's hard to say which I liked best. Oratorio really struck me; I just loved it there. Any place with children, though, will strike a chord with me! Pasaco was beautiful, especially the ocean! I really enjoyed the ruggedness there. El Chal was gorgeous, including Santa Elena and the island of Flores. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof..."

It will be hard to leave Guatemala, but I trust I will be back someday, Lord willing. Wherever He leads I'll go. God bless MAM! *Kari Shirk, Cass City, MI*

Being in Guatemala for a month was quite an experience! Even with its ups and downs I could still relive it. It was challenging, but a lot of fun too! I couldn't have asked for a better team to be with. The



**WATER TEAM 2013:**

**Kari Shirk, Rachel Martin, and Misty Clingerman.**

three of us sang "You Are My All in All" numerous times, and it was our favorite.

Then we had those wonderful times praying and asking God to help us with the language. It was fun trying to converse, but it got frustrating too. I was glad we had each other and God on our side.

Being in Guatemala has really opened my eyes! It has made me see others, not just as people, but as lost souls. I also realize that Guatemala has changed me too.

I have also realized how truly blessed I am. I have so much compared to some who are even more content than I. While in Guatemala I didn't have access to some things I would call necessities. I recognize how much I have that I really don't need.

So yes, Guatemala has helped me be more mission-minded and to have more of a burden for lost souls. May God guide us as we spread His Word abroad.

*Misty Clingerman, Rome, PA*

*Hola!* Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." This verse has been an encouragement to me these four weeks here in Guatemala. The Lord surely has been my strength in every situation. All I can say is "Thank you, God."

The experiences I've had in El Chal, El Naranjo, Pasaco, and Oratorio will never be forgotten. Each place was unique, yet such a blessing and challenge to me! As a nurse, El Chal and El Naranjo were special because I had opportunity to help in the clinics. Not only the physical needs were abundant, but the spiritual as well. Sometimes a patient just needed a listening ear and a prayer because of family stress or threats—how sad! But working with the sick was a highlight for me.

Pasaco and Oratorio were incredible as well. We were able to soak up true Guatemalan culture, and I enjoyed that! Whether grinding corn, shelling black beans, making chuchitos, patting tortillas, or playing soccer with the children on the street, each place left an impression on me. It was a tremendous blessing to work closely with the local people! Even with the language barrier, I found out that the Lord was faithful to interpret for us. Communication was fun and yet *muy dificil* sometimes.

I thank God once again for sending me here; it truly was a growing experience. Guatemala will always have a special place in my heart! *Adios, Dios le Bendiga!*

*Rachel Martin, Shippensburg, PA*

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