



# MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

## North American Workers in Guatemala



Steve Steckly



Wendell Diem

### Oratorio

Steve Steckly lives in Oratorio and is involved in pastoring the church in Pital. His term of service under MAM came to an end in late August, but he has decided to stay on and work directly under the Guatemalan church.

Wendell Diem shares a house with Steve and works closely with the Guatemalan bishop Isaías. Wendell often travels up the mountain to the church in La Pastoría to help out with Sunday morning services.

### Santa Rosita/El Naranjo

Daniel Eby, along with his wife Dora and two boys Duane and Danny, live in Santa Rosita. Daniel leads out in the small church there as well as working with community people.

Steve and Melissa Miller and their two girls Brooklyn and Leticia, live in El Naranjo. Steve works beside Daniel in church work and supports the work of the clinic. They are working toward starting weekly services in El Naranjo as well as Santa Rosita.

Jared Kropf lives with Daniel and Dora Eby and is the VS worker in Santa Rosita.

Dorcas Miller serves as head nurse in the clinic and has worked in Guatemala for more than eight years.

Lauren Martin is a nurse in the clinic in El Naranjo.

Abigail Martin works in the clinic pharmacy.



Daniel and Dora Eby & family



Steve and Melissa Miller & family



Jared Kropf



Dorcas Miller



Lauren Martin



Abigail Martin



# EDITORIAL

Anonymous

## The Urgent Warning That Wasn't

Darkness fell over rush hour in Guatemala City on Thursday, October first. Across Guatemala, schools had celebrated "Child's Day," and in thousands of homes the activities of the day were recounted with great gusto.

On the southeast edge of the city is an area called Santa Catarina Pinula. This picturesque area is home to a variety of people—and houses. Some homes are simple wood and sheet metal constructions; other are substantial two-story concrete dwellings.

As traffic thinned that evening, only God knew what was in store for those who lived in Santa Catarina Pinula. Frequent rains had destabilized the rugged area. Without warning, a massive chunk of mountainside broke loose and plunged into the ravine, smashing, smothering, and suffocating. One hundred twenty five homes were destroyed or buried, some under dozens of meters of earth. According to a survivor, "en un segundo pasó todo"—it all happened in a second.

Different stories emerged. Some survived because they were inside, while a family member perished running an errand. Other families were waiting for Dad to return from work and Dad was the only survivor. Total families were lost.

A rescue effort was immediately begun. Hundreds of people dug and listened and searched and prayed. At first they heard shouts and shrieks of people buried alive. Text messages were received from people trapped beneath the mud and rubble. When rescue workers heard a voice, everyone would silently drop and press their ears to the ground, trying to locate the exact area to dig. One father, arriving at the area of his house, borrowed a shovel and started to dig. He continued all night and most of the next day, but there were still more than five meters of earth burying his house.

Heavy machinery was brought in and massive excavation started. At the time of this writing, 253 bodies have been recovered and 374 are still missing.

Tragic. Incredible grief for many; life-altering losses for survivors; hundreds of souls swept into eternity. Forever. Some call it Guatemala's worst natural disaster since Hurricane Mitch.

But it isn't Guatemala's worst disaster.

Homes are destroyed every day. Marriage fidelity is buried in the steamy cesspool of immorality. Children are orphaned, wives abandoned, and communities destroyed; yet few search for survivors or declare it a national disaster. Youth sacrifice their virginity and dignity looking for meaning and satisfaction, yet no newspaper bothers to give time and space to these problems; they don't sell newspapers.

The Santa Catarina community was warned twice that it was a high-risk area—once in 2008, once in Dec. 2014. Not even CONRED, the arm of government that gave the warning, could have imagined the enormity of what happened. CONRED quickly pointed out that they had evaluated the area, declared it high-risk, *and* warned the community. Social pressure is mounting to pursue legal action against

those responsible for building houses in that area, *and* against those who did not transmit the warning clearly.

If you are a Christian, you are the spiritual CONRED for the people around you. You *know* we live in a high-risk zone, and YOU are responsible to warn them of the coming destruction. And so we must open our mouths. Living right is paramount, but if I do not open my mouth as well, I am not living right! Jesus said, "Go . . . and preach the gospel." Is it enough to quietly live out my Christian faith? It's impossible! If I do not preach, I cannot claim to follow Jesus or do His will.

Not a gifted speaker? That's normal. Neither were Peter and John. But they were full of the Holy Ghost and opened their mouths at Jesus' command. What would the New Testament look like had the apostles "lived out" the Gospel without being "too vocal" about Jesus? The Book of Acts simply recounts what happened when the believers boldly spoke about Jesus; would it even exist otherwise? If you pulled the preaching out of Acts, would you have 3,000 converts on Pentecost? Would Stephen have been stoned? Would Peter and Paul have bounced in and out of jail? What about the whippings, stonings, beatings, and beheadings? No.

Neither would the church be planted in Africa, nor spread through Asia Minor, nor crossed into Europe. No sermon on Mars Hill, no flaming revival in Ephesus, no earth-shaking prison experience that started a church in Philippi.

Persecution for preaching is normal; we have experienced a few hundred years of abnormal living in North America. Peace, prosperity, and freedom have given us huge advantages and opportunities, but they have affected us in negative ways. When my fervor for Christ wanes, the silence grows ominous. The landslide could happen anytime. Homes are collapsing—swept away in the powerful current of changing morals. The force of decay and the pressure to be quiet and tolerant can only be stopped by preaching about the Rock of Ages. And that Rock is Jesus Christ—our LORD and coming King!

Let us not simply pass our neighbour by on the other side with a courteous smile. Let's tell him about the impending doom! If you love him, do what is best for him, not what is most comfortable for you both. The folks in Santa Catarina Pinula were warned, but were never ordered out of their houses. Because they only heard a general warning, no one abandoned their home and moved out to save their lives and families. Let's share the truth lovingly, yet earnestly and repeatedly! They need to know the seriousness of the situation! Are we going to be true friends?

Not everyone is an eloquent Apollos. But if you can ask for potatoes at the supper table, you can share Christ. Paul shared his testimony unashamedly—before murderous crowds and before kings. Why? To warn people of the wrath to come. To elevate Jesus. To bring the hearers to Jesus like every real friend will do.

The danger is imminent and the time is short. Preaching brings pain, but not preaching brings a whole lot more.

## El Chal

Stephan and Brenda Gingerich, Jasmine, Jeffry, and Hubener live in El Chal. Stephan serves as church pastor and school administrator, and has been very involved in the clinic work as well.

Nelson Plett, with his wife Susan and their six children—Tanya, Garth, Jody, Ian, Lynn, and Nicole—lived in the El Chal mission house. They served as houseparents for nearly a year before their term ended in late October. We want to thank them for their service to the Lord with MAM.

Benj and Holly Martin and family also support the work of the church and clinic, and live on a small farm just outside of El Chal.

Kendra Lily Martin has worked with the clinic team in El Chal and just recently finished her schooling to become a nurse.

Victoria Hershberger serves as nurse in the El Chal clinic.

Kelly Ramer is the most recent clinic staff member to arrive in Guatemala. She came on August 11 and is working as a nurse in the El Chal clinic.

Judy Lehman is a teacher in the school in El Chal.

Waneda Erb serves as secretary for the school in El Chal.

Sara Breneman is a personal worker in El Chal.

Ben Brubacher is stationed in El Chal as VS worker.

Irvin Reimer, his wife Rachel, and their son Kyle arrived in Guatemala on August 19. They spent a few weeks studying Spanish, then filled in as houseparents at headquarters for a few weeks before moving to El Chal in late October to serve as houseparents there.



**Stephen and Brenda Gingerich & family**



**Nelson and Susan Plett & family**



**Benji and Holly Martin & family**



**Kendra Lily Martin**



**Victoria Hershberger**



**Kelly Ramer**



**Judy Lehman**



**Waneda Erb**



**Sara Breneman**



**Ben Brubacher**



**Irvin and Rachel Reimer & Kyle**

## Guatemala City

Ross and Donita Good live in the city where he has served as mission director for three-and-a-half years. Their son Dezhan enjoyed having Leopoldo living with them for the school year. Their term of service comes to an end the middle of November, when they plan to move back to Canada.

Harold Kauffman, considered one of MAM's founders, is still living in Guatemala and frequently travels to different churches to encourage the brethren.

Jonathan Bear was a VS worker in the city but recently has been assigned as Harold's full-time companion, driving him to places he needs to go and learning from his example.

Mark and Norma Gingerich had both served in Guatemala as singles and, after they were married, have lived in Guatemala for thirty years, serving in various capacities of church planting and leadership. Mark had bishop responsibility over various congregations. Mark and Norma have decided to terminate their time in Guatemala and return to Canada, leaving in October. Various Guatemalan brethren have stepped in to help cover the responsibilities that Mark is leaving. We want to wish them a very big thank-you for the hours of love and labor that they put into the work of building Christ's church here. May God's blessing be upon them as they continue serving Him in the north.

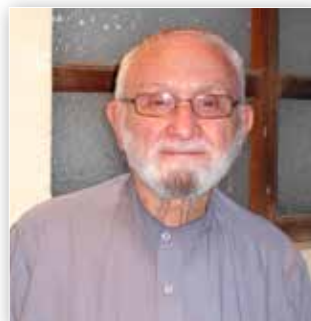
Laresa Good continues to work in domestics at headquarters.

Galen Miller has been serving in the city as VS worker.

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Ross and Donita Good & family



Harold Kauffman



Jonathan Bear



Mark and Norma Gingerich



Laresa Good



Galen Miller

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