



MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

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History . . .

"El Aposento Alto" Church, Los Achiotés

It was rainy season when a new couple came to our community and became our neighbors. They dressed quite differently than we were used to. Abel and Sara Lemus and their daughters were from El Chal, Petén, and were Mennonite Christians. Over time they began to meet in their home on Sundays with some other people from the Capital who dressed like them. But we, and all our relatives, still believed what we had been taught from childhood and worshiped inanimate images.

We went through difficult economic times; poverty was truly great in our family. Sara Lemus began to visit us regularly and invited us to attend a Sunday service.

Hesitantly, I finally visited one of their meetings. There was something different about them; they did not use any instruments when they sang, and I could sense peacefulness there. After the singing was a small devotional, and the meeting came to an end.

Sara Lemus continued visiting and encouraging us to go with them on Sunday, and, although my husband seemed to have no interest, I began to feel drawn back the second and third time.

Something strange happened during my third visit. Something inside made me want to be part of this distinct group. I felt a great burden and sorrow for the sin that had been a part of my life for so long. I became converted by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour of my life. I could feel great joy in my heart.

After the service many questions began coming to my mind. How will my husband receive this news? my parents? my in-laws?

When I told my husband that I had become a Christian, he became very angry—so angry that I slept outside the house that Sunday night with my three young children, Joel, Glenda, and Mauricio; my husband, in his anger and fury, let us fend for ourselves in the cold of the night. That night was extremely difficult.

The fervor of my conversion was there to motivate me. I received words of encouragement as well, and the next Sunday I went with my small children to meet with the small group of believers. Even though my husband was still in disagreement, I already felt part of them and started calling them brothers, although I had not yet been baptized.

For some time our prayers were for my husband, that he, too, could believe the truth. Five months passed after my conversion before our prayers bore fruit; the very person who made us endure that cold night outside was saying, "I accept the Lord Jesus Christ." What a happy day for me; my

husband had also believed the Word, which shows us that Jesus is our only Saviour.

Now that we were Christians, great trials were soon coming: great poverty, contempt, ridicule, and threats. My father-in-law was angry when he found out about our conversion, and he came to our little house made of sticks and mud and told us in an intimidating tone that we must stop attending those meetings, and that if we would not, he would kill us. He told us he was going to do it while we slept; he would arrive at night with his sharp ax to cut down the foundations of the house so we would be under the rubble. It left us feeling very weak.

When we were alone, I told my husband that God would not allow him to hurt us. We decided to fast and pray together with the brothers. A few days passed and my father-in-law did not show up at our little house.

During this time of unrest, the brethren began to build the first chapel, which created a happy atmosphere. It was difficult because it was rainy season, and every time it rained they could not work because the building was made of adobe. In time they managed to complete the construction, and we were all very happy.

My father-in-law never carried out his threat, and we knew that God had answered our prayers.

Now that we had a formal chapel, new visitors began to

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The Los Achiotés congregation today



EDITORIAL

GM

A Changeless God in a Changing World

Things around us change every day. Governments change. Presidents change. The way the country operates changes. The passing of a loved one can change life rapidly and it will never be the same.

We tend to think ahead and make plans, but since we don't know the future, our plans are subject to change.

Some changes are good. How many of us would like to go for a week without changing our clothes? After driving for eight hours, a change of position is a relief.

The road that we drive to church every Sunday morning is being changed from a rough old road full of pot holes and patches to a new, well-paved, smooth road. The time of transition is a bit difficult, but the change is good.

The best change that can happen is when a sinful person changes into a born-again believer. Without change, this would be impossible.

Some changes are not good. It's hard to see a young man, with whom you have worked for years and who has been a faithful church member, change into someone who is no longer interested in being part of the church.

God never changes. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). When God says something, it's good forever. We need never doubt what He says. God makes plans and then carries them out. He never has to change His plans, because He knows the future.

When our life changes, God knew about it before we did. When a new missionary comes or one who has been here for years goes home, God knows all about it. He has it all figured out. We tend to wonder why. Why must someone leave who has so much experience? Why do we continually need to train new people?

I recently took a bus to an area I had never bused to before. We came to a crossroad, and since I expected the bus to go straight, I got off. As I began walking to my destination, I watched the very same bus do a loop and head past me on the same road I

was on. If I would have known where the bus was going, I could have ridden to within three blocks of my destination.

God knows what is best. We can put our trust in Him. We need to make sure we're "on the right bus"—and that it's God who is guiding us. As long as we stay on the bus, we'll get to where we need to be. Life's changes are often new and different and feel hard to us. But God sees them as just a turn in the road that He knew was there all along. He is constant. He knows what's best and will always seek the best in our lives as we learn to trust Him.

Are we seeking to make a change in the lives of others?

Financial Report for Mennonite Air Missions

January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015

Beginning Balance	\$74,827.87
Income.....	<u>441,527.72</u>
Actual Operating Income.....	516,355.59
Loan income	<u>25,000.00</u>
Total income	541,355.59

Disbursements

Literature	\$1,687.98
Newsletter.....	9,279.78
Travel	27,655.16
Retirement and Medical	3,300.00
Worker allowances	185,177.24
Bank & miscellaneous charges.....	177.78
Transfer to field.....	242,180.26
Supplies	1,650.14
U.S. checks for Guatemalan funds ..	<u>3,428.74</u>

Actual operating disbursements

Loan Repayment.....	<u>25,000.00</u>
Total Loan Repayment	<u>25,000.00</u>

Ending Checkbook Balance.....

Amos Hurst

“El Aposento Alto” . . . continued

come and many were converted, both youth and adults. The Spirit of God had done great work. We had by this time been baptized and all were comforted, encouraged, and exhorted by the Word of God.

The church grew in number. My parents became believers; they, like us, had to lay aside vain things that a Christian should not have.

By now there was a large number of believers, but we did not have a local pastor. Even though someone visited us every weekend, the thirst for the Word grew. As time went on, the first pastor was commissioned for our church, and, though he was a foreigner, he spoke our language. Tall, fair-skinned, North American Harold Lichty and his wife and young daughters moved to Los Achiotes.

Our church was the first in our community to have a local pastor. During his leadership, the number of church services per week increased from one to three, and we began a sisters meeting on Thursday.

We were able to help other congregations, such as Porvenir and Pital, by visiting them; and, although there is much to tell about thefts, scares, and impassable roads, it is difficult to remember everything in detail.

Harold served for two years, and when his time was up he had to leave, even though some, including myself, did not want him to go.

After he left, other pastors came, such as Rafael Segura and Santiago Gingerich. Today our chapel is slightly larger and in a different place than the first chapel. Our pastor is still Brother Rafael, and, although the congregation is small, there are young members (and older ones as well) who need support.

Twenty-one years have passed since the Word of God came to our community of Los Achiotes, and though my husband has given up in the race, I have four children in their youth who are believers, and we continue to pray that my husband would return to the way of the Lord.

Aura

Emmanuel Work Project

A new day dawns; what might it hold? It surely will contain new memories for our group of nine to take back to Pennsylvania. The Guatemalans would call this a cold morning, but it reminds me of a song: *Slowly but surely the clouds roll away and the sun started shining again. Down deep inside my soul, where it once was cold and dark, I feel your love take hold, way down deep in my heart.*

People are passing in vehicles, on bicycles, or on foot. I wonder as they pass by—is their life cold and dark?

We are working at Emmanuel, a church in San Cristobal. The kitchen is in a separate building, and we are laying block to add a second floor. When it is completed, the church will have a large room for meetings and fellowship dinners, plus two smaller rooms for Sunday school. The concrete is mixed on the street, then passed via assembly line up the scaffolding to the second floor.

The women from the church are providing the noon meal for us. I have never before prepared papaya sprinkled



The work team that helped in San Cristobal's building project.



Muscles in action: concrete was mixed in the street and relayed to the roof.

with lemon juice, or eaten fried plantains, or tried avocados in a tossed salad. It's interesting to watch women pat dough balls in the air and in a few seconds have a tortilla ready to heat. Tortillas are a staple for every meal.

We often get into heavy traffic going to and from work, but there are many sights to see, like the big groups waiting to get into the already crowded city buses—hold on tight if you're hanging out the doorway! Someone is juggling balls to draw attention and a few *quetzales*. One evening we passed downed power lines that were on fire; they were replaced a couple days later. A man leading a muzzled goat is going from door to door selling fresh milk.

We are staying at a house that MAM uses in the city suburbs. A grocery store is only a mile away, providing essentials for our morning and evening meals. An English/Spanish dictionary is helpful, but with our limited Spanish, puzzled expressions and pointing is a major part of our communication. Pastor Victor Ovalle enjoys hearing us attempt to speak Spanish just as much as we enjoy hearing

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Emmanuel Work Project . . . continued

him speak Pennsylvania Dutch. Oops! I just said "thank you" to a person walking by instead of good morning. So now we know how it feels when a foreigner tries to communicate with us at home.

The high altitude of the city didn't bother us too much, but then we started hiking up Volcano Acatenango. At the summit we stood awestruck, looking down on the clouds and the miniature city far below. The neighboring volcano, Fuego, gave us quite a show of thunderous eruptions. How can people think there is no Creator?

Our two week stay here in Guatemala is nearing its end. The scratches and bruises and the peeling, sunburned skin have been totally worth it. We all received a new appreciation for life at home (even if frigid temperatures await us) and an awareness of our excess of material things.

Miriam Weaver

Staff

Carmelo and Teresa Reynosa and their five children, Walfred, Axel, Fredy, Mariana, and Andrea, came to mission headquarters to be houseparents in November. Carmelo works at a shoe factory just down the street and is able to come home for lunch to be with the family. Their humble, servant attitude has been a blessing to everyone who passes through.



Carmelo and Teresa Reynosa are now serving as houseparents.

Thank You

Dear Fellow laborers and supporters,

We have been blessed by another year of generous giving by you, the supporters of Mennonite Air Missions. The work of MAM is funded by individuals like you who gave through your church, your business, and personally. Thank you for joining the MAM team with your prayers and generosity during this important time in Guatemala. We look forward to your continued support in 2016.

Amos Hurst
MAM Board Treasurer

Wilmer and Rhoda Lehman and their daughter Alisa came for the month of February to help with the busy schedule and the changes that were taking place. We want to thank them for the blessing they were while they were here.



Wilmer and Rhoda Lehman and daughter Alisa

Daniel Meyer is our new single worker. He came to us from West Virginia and is part of the Yarrowburg Mennonite Church. He arrived in Guatemala and went directly to Santa Rosita to work with Jonathan Bear, the other single worker, and the rest of the team there. He recently came into the City for three weeks of Spanish school and will continue working to master the language.



Daniel Meyer

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