



MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

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Baptism in Oratorio

On the Sunday afternoon of September 4, we were blessed to hold a special baptismal service for three young souls who had expressed their desire to be baptized. Two are sisters, Elda and Olimpia Martínez, nineteen and eighteen years old respectively. Both are daughters of José and Ágüida. The third is eighteen-year-old Elías Molina, son of Elías and Enma.

Please pray with us for these three new members of our church family here in Oratorio! Elda and Olimpia face ungodly influences from their older siblings. Elías comes from a broken home where his father has left his mother and is living in sin. His mother has recently expressed her desire to come back to the church, but also needs your prayers. We praise God for these three young people who have taken this step of obedience to Christ.



Elías Molina, Elda Martínez, and Olimpia Martínez were baptized on September 4.

La Pastoría Iglesia El Aposento Alto

La Pastoría is situated in the mountains among the coffee groves about five kilometers outside of the town of Oratorio. Living conditions in the small village are very primitive; there is no electricity or running water. The village is now easily accessible by vehicle, at least if it's four-wheel drive.

The congregation there is small with three members who have been faithful for many years. For the last four years Wendell Diem and Francisco Segura have been taking care of the church there, but recently Wendell has taken more responsibility in the congregation. Services are held on Sunday mornings, and on Thursday afternoons youth from Oratorio hold Bible classes with the children of the village. The children have a lot of interest in learning the Bible lessons, and an average of thirty of them attend the classes every week. They are also invited to come to Sunday school, and they have shown much interest in that as well. Just a week

ago, a sixty-two-year-old man from the village expressed his desire to surrender his life to God and is beginning to attend the services.

This work began years ago, when it was still very difficult to access La Pastoría. There was no road to the village, and it was hard to reach by foot. One had to walk the paths that ran between the coffee farms. Little by little a better road was made, but it was often impassable because of the rain. The missionaries that have visited or held services in La Pastoría have often experienced a very difficult transit. Thank God there have been people willing to go to the village in spite of the difficult road.

In about 1977 two families from La Pastoría, the Emilio Padilla and Porfirio Rosales families, went to El Guayabo (La Sorpresa) to attend services and were converted. As that was too far away for them to continue attending, the brethren from the

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EDITORIAL

WRD

Trying Times

"These are the times that try men's souls . . ." These words were penned hundreds of years ago by Thomas Paine. They still strike a chord that deeply resonates, though not in the sense that Mr. Paine intended. Although his words are inspiring, his eloquence was misguided; he was advocating for an earthly, political cause. But in spite of his misplaced zeal, I think we can appreciate his exhortation if we apply it to the spiritual warfare we are in. And in that light, I'd like to quote Mr. Paine a bit more, though paraphrasing him slightly: *"The summer soldier and the sunshine [Christian] will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their [King] . . ."* (Words in brackets are mine.)

What is the crisis in which we find ourselves today? Jesus said it best: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). In this crisis we are all being tried. Our loyalties are being tested every single day. Wickedness is ever increasing in the world around us; fundamental values and basic decency are eroding away at an astonishing rate. And sadly, fervent Christian devotion is cooling while indifference and tolerance are rising in its place.

It is a crisis. Society around us is disintegrating ever more rapidly. What was repulsive to many and even illegal a few years ago is not only being tolerated, but promoted. Those who dare to speak out for the truth are labeled as hateful bigots. Although Christians from centuries ago probably wondered the same thing, we ask: How much worse can it get? Unfortunately, the forecast isn't good. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

But what about the church and her collective love for her Saviour? Is she doomed to indifference and apathy? Must we accept lukewarm love and dwindling devotion as the new normal? To these questions, may we join in a resounding "NO!" We dare not choose complacency. We must maintain a glowing, fervent love for our Lord and His church.

The sunshine Christian may be overcome with spiritual drowsiness and the drunken stupor of worldliness and materialism. The summer soldier may walk off the battlefield as fighting becomes intense and dark clouds gather threateningly. But we must remain sober-minded and focused on eternity, seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness.

A lukewarm love for Christ and for His church is one of the major maladies afflicting the body of believers today. As this love cools, there is an inevitable buckling to the pressure of the "me first" doctrine that the world lives by. This self-centered attitude makes submission to authority and to the brotherhood seem like a bothersome, old-fashioned idea. The focus slides from the lofty goal of seeking those things that are Christ's to pursuing a personal vision and ambition.

The real test of our love for Christ is our love for the brethren (1 John 4:20). The real test of our love for the brethren is in our relationships and interactions with the brethren with whom we work and fellowship. It may be easy to love Christian brothers and sisters from the other side of the globe, whom we see in photos and read about in mission newsletters. Do you know why it's easy? Because we don't have to relate to them on a regular basis. Since we don't know them well, their imperfections don't rub against ours. We don't need to sit down and listen to them, have patience with them, or submit to them in a personal way. But what about our local brotherhood or fellowship? Is it marred with distrust, dishonesty, and damaged interpersonal relationships? Or do we humbly listen to and learn from each other? Do we prefer one another in honor and submit to each other? "Yes," one might say, "except when I know for sure that my idea is the best one. Except when what the others are doing doesn't line up with my vision for the work."

We must remember that when God commands us to submit to one another, He means it. When God commands us to love our brethren, He is talking about those brothers and sisters that we come into contact with. We are not asked to love some invisible group of believers; we are asked to love our brothers whom we can see, even those who seem so unworkable and "rub us the wrong way." We are called to seek the highest good of the body of Christ, even at our own expense. This we will do if we truly love the Lord Jesus.

Seeking first God's kingdom and loving His family are inseparable concepts. Seeking those things that are Christ's is an unattainable goal if we aren't willing to seek the good of His body, which is to say, our brothers and sisters in the faith. Those brothers and sisters who, like us, are fallible human beings.

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La Pastoría . . . continued

capital began holding services in nearby Oratorio. The brethren from La Pastoría would walk down to Oratorio for church services.

In January of 1981, Earl and Hettie Barnhart and family moved to the nearby village of El Molino. They held services in Oratorio and also went to La Pastoría to hold services on Wednesday afternoons, returning before dark when possible. At times they had to walk in the rain and the mud.

In June of 1981, the Barnhart family left for the United States with the intention of later returning to Guatemala. Doug and Anna Hodgins, who had been living in San Sur, arrived in Oratorio to help with the work in the absence of the Barnharts. But in September 1981, all of the North American missionaries of M.A.M. left Guatemala due to the civil war.

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The chapel in La Pastoría.



A children's class in La Pastoría.

La Pastoría . . . continued

In the years following the departure of the missionaries, the Guatemalan brethren continued the work of the church. Carlos Urizar, who had gone to Oratorio because of violence in Mixcolajà, tended to the work in La Pastoría for a time. Then Juan Antonio Escobar arrived in La Pastoría, where he lived and pastored the church.

In November of 1989, Isaias Muñoz and family moved to La Pastoría to take charge of the congregation. They lived there until January of 1994. Some of the church families moved to Oratorio, so services were held there again. Since then there has been no resident pastor in La Pastoría, but the brethren in Oratorio have always held services and taken charge of the work in this village. Of the members that once were part of the church of La Pastoría, some have moved to the town of Oratorio, others have left the church, and some have passed away.

In the past, most of the residents of La Pastoría identified as Catholics; but in recent years changes have been seen in this area, and people are more open to hearing the Gospel. Throughout the years, the enemy has wanted to destroy the work of God in this village, but thank God there are still faithful Christians. Let's pray that the church would grow in La Pastoría.

Jenny Diem

Pio Franco

Pio Franco, deacon in the San Sur congregation, went to meet his Lord and Saviour on September 25th. He had suffered the effects of a stroke since July, not being able to walk, but today those sufferings are over.

**Newsletter subscriptions and address changes can be requested at mam@clp.org.
Visit our website at mennoniteairmissions.org to sign up for digital newsletters,
or email your request to mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com.**

New Staff

On August 26, Twila Miller joined the team at mission headquarters. For the first few weeks, she filled in for Laresa Good, who was home on furlough. Twila will continue to work beside Laresa doing domestic work. Twila comes to us from the West Fairview Mennonite congregation in Nebraska. She is looking forward to the day when Spanish will be an asset rather than a hindrance in her communication.



**Twila Miller is
from West Fair-
view, Nebraska.**

Trying Times . . . continued

One of the saddest verses in the Bible must be Philippians 2:21. The apostle Paul bluntly declared: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." It must be heartbreaking to the Lord; He willingly gave up everything to seek us and our salvation, and yet so many of His "disciples" are unwilling to give up their all for the sake of the Gospel.

Are you seeking those things that are Jesus Christ's? Are your eyes focused on things above? Is your love for Christ and for the church vibrant and sincere? Are you willing to suffer personal loss for the good of the brotherhood and for the sake of God's kingdom? Your loyalty is being tested in these very trying times.

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