



# MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

## Commissioning in Porvenir

On January 18 a special service was held in the church in Porvenir. Galen Miller was given a two-year commission as pastor. Galen and Zachary Morgan have been living in the area and serving the church in various ways for the past year.

Around eighty people were present for the service, including visitors from the churches in Guatemala City, Oratorio, and Los Achiotos. Members of Galen's family were also there.

Please pray for Galen as he continues to work with the church here in Porvenir. Pray that God will fill the vacancies in all of the churches in Guatemala with willing leaders.



Isaias Muñoz, Galen Miller, and Victor Ovalle at Galen's commissioning service.

## Church in Santa Rosita

(Part 1 of 2)

A twelve-hour drive lies between Guatemala City and the small town of Santa Rosita. This small *casario* (group of houses) is situated along the banks of the San Pedro river in Northern Petén, near the Mexican border and within sight of a small Mayan ruin. It is an agricultural town and consists of about two dozen houses, two small stores, a public school, a recently finished government health center, and five churches—Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Mennonite, and two Evangelical. We will discuss the history of the Mennonite church.

In September of 1995 Carlos Lima of El Chal, Petén informed his pastors that he would be taking a new job—caring for a remote farm farther north. The move was made and the family relocated to the isolated farm along the San Pedro River. Concerned for their spiritual welfare, the brethren made plans to visit. Ester, one of the daughters, remembers that Juan Salguero, Sabastian Esquivel, and Vernon Martin made the first long trip by car and then by boat to encourage the family in the faith. The visits continued, and a few neighbors began attending the services.

Interest in this new area began to grow within MAM, and a vision for a church was born. The small town of Santa Rosita seemed to be the ideal location for a church plant, although at the time the town already had a Catholic church, a Kingdom Hall, and a Prince of Peace (Evangelical) church. It lay about halfway between the Lima farm and Naranjo, where the road trip ended and the river travel began. Today, a trip from El Chal to Naranjo takes about 3½ hours. Twenty-two years ago the road was still not paved, so you can imagine how long the rough ride took.

At first, services in Santa Rosita were held every two weeks in someone's home. Later, an acre-sized plot became available nearby, complete with a small store by the street. When the new chapel's thatched roof was completed, services were held on the new property, and the visiting brothers would sleep in the old store.

In 1998 the church building was finished, and in January of 1999 the first baptisms were held in it. Carlos's daughter Ester had made a commitment in El

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# EDITORIAL

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## Laborers Together With God

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). For 6,000 years or perhaps a few more, God has been searching out men and women who are ready and willing to labor with Him in the work of spreading the Good News.

In the Old Testament we see the example of Jonathan when the Philistines came against the children of Israel. In 1 Samuel 14:6 Jonathan told his armor bearer that he was ready to go fight. He was willing to put his life on the line because he believed that God was able save them. He said, “For there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.” As he stepped out from the rocks—his “comfort zone”—the Philistines saw him. At that moment, God began to work in the Philistine army and set every man against his neighbor so that the whole host melted away. In 1 Samuel 14:45 is this testimony of Jonathan: “For he hath wrought with God this day.”

In this account Jonathan and his armor bearer labored together in the battle with the Lord. We are not in a physical battle like Jonathan was, but in a spiritual warfare where we need help from our brothers and sisters. God has not called us to work alone, but has provided the church to give us armor bearers who can help quench the fiery darts of Satan. “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). Christ is the head of this body, and as each member fulfills his role, everything goes smoothly. The Gospel can be spread much further than if each member does his own thing.

I see this principle in a tangible way while playing soccer with the native children here. When an opposing team member is about to steal the ball, a player can pass the ball to a team member who is in a better position to take the ball closer to the goal. As the whole team keeps working together and passing the ball, they can get it into the goal. When a player misses or fumbles a pass, his teammates come to his aid to help regain their position. During a game advice is often shouted back and forth that can be of value to winning; usually it is received without much protest. How is it in our churches?

Are we willing to help our brother or sister with their burdens? When they fall, do we rally around and help them back to their feet? When a suggestion is given, do we throw it out the door without giving it another thought?

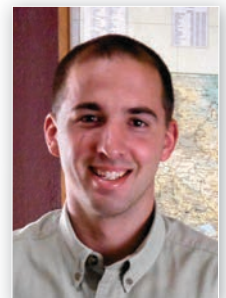
Exodus 18:17-24 gives us the account of Moses judging the people and the work being too great for him to do alone. His father-in-law Jethro suggested that Moses choose others to help teach and judge the people’s matters to keep from wearying the people or himself. Did Moses get puffed up and angry with this advice? I believe that he saw the value in it, and he “hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law.”

In Mark 6:7 we read that Jesus sent out His disciples two by two to preach repentance. Later in His ministry He sent out another seventy to prepare the people to receive Him when He passed through their villages. Luke 10:1-11 tells us that the harvest is great and the workers are few, so we are to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest. He also warns us that the road will not always be easy; some will not receive the Gospel, and we will be as sheep among wolves. But though there are dangers and though people will reject our message, Jesus has said that He will never leave or forsake us.

Jesus is still calling for workers in his vineyard. There still are places of service that need to be filled. The needs can be at home or in another country. The question I want to leave with you is, “What will you do with His call?”

## New Personnel

Norman Nolt left his construction job in Leola, Pennsylvania, to come to Guatemala and serve under MAM. He is from the Pleasant Valley congregation. Norman is living in Guatemala City and hopes to learn the language well so he can communicate and reach out to others here in Guatemala.



Norman Nolt

## Church in Santa Rosita . . . continued

Chal, but had fallen away and shackled up with Yovani Castillo, a neighbor boy. A few months after running off together, both Yovani and Ester dedicated their lives to Christ in the same service. The pair separated for two months and then were married. Six months later both were part of that first baptismal class, which also consisted of Ester's sister Delia.

Church attendance included people from homes scattered along the river. Yovani recounts that a typical Sunday included paddling down river for an hour and a half, then walking for over half an hour through uncleared pastures to get to church. They would often return home late at night.

In 1999 Carlos and Francisca continued their nomadic habits and left the area. Sadly, Carlos found being a Christian too difficult and did not agree with all that the church taught. The membership slowly grew to five souls with a few more in attendance. Tono would have joined, had the church allowed him to divorce his first wife and marry his current live-in. Another family left when the daughter-in-law learned in instruction class about Communion and feetwashing. Her father-in-law insisted that was only for the apostles. Miguel and Chus were married by Mark Gingrich. Chus was taken in as a member and Miguel began instruction classes, but after three months of dressing like a Mennonite, Chus gave it up.

Glenn and Grace Martin, who had taken Mark Gingrich's place in El Chal, moved to Naranjo while a permanent house was being constructed in Santa Rosita. Holly (Long) Martin remembers being part of SMBI's WATER Team that helped to dig the footers for the mission house in 1999. In 2000 the Glenn Martin family moved into the new two-story house with block walls and a thatched roof beside the lazy San Pedro river, thus becoming the first resident missionaries.

A medical clinic was needed, so an old store on the church property was overhauled to serve both as house and clinic. When it was finished, the main room served as kitchen and living quarters. There was one bedroom. Across the hall from the tiny consult room was a minuscule pharmacy with a window that opened onto the porch.

Steve and Rachel Musser moved to Santa Rosita with their six-month-old daughter in March of 2002 to assist Glenn with the church work and help with the clinic. They lived with Glenn's family until the clinic house was ready for use. The clinic officially opened in October

of 2002 when nurse Laurel Krider came to live in Santa Rosita, although Rachel had already been unofficially seeing patients who came to her door. Steve and Rachel served until November 2003. Laurel helped with children's Bible club and taught Sunday school to an average of thirty children.

Matthew and Heidi Barnhart arrived in the fall of 2003 and moved into the clinic house until Glenn's family left in June 2004. That same month Rigoberto Portillo held weekend meetings, packing out the little chapel with 120 people. Matthew helped to deepen the clinic well by hand when water problems arose. The Barnhart family were the only missionaries there for almost a year when Laurel left the end of 2004.

Yovani and Ester moved out of the area for two years and lived near Coban. During that time they would sometimes catch a ride or a mission flight back to Santa Rosita for services. Yovani returned in 2005 to build a large wooden boat for the mission. His family soon followed him, and once more they were attending services in the thatched church building.

Sometimes there were gaps between missionaries or furlough absences. At times like these, VS fellows might fill in, or a national couple might move there. During 2005 the clinic was without a nurse, so Holly Long, an LPN from El Chal, traveled up for short periods to take care of the clinic.

Jeff and Crystal Yoder moved to Santa Rosita in November of 2005. They lived in the clinic house, allowing Dave and Christine Horst to live in the big house with their family when they came two weeks later. The Horsts left in March 2007. The clinic opened again in February of 2006 when Ashley Beck came to serve as a nurse. Krista Good served as her support staff in the clinic for one

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The thatch-roofed church building was built in 1998.

## Church in Santa Rosita . . . continued

year. With the increase in personnel, a weekly children's class was started up again. Young people from upriver were brought down in the new boat for youth meetings, and a few ended up attending MAM's youth institutes.

Over the years, temporary work has brought many

people to the Santa Rosita area. Many have attended faithfully, but like so many in Petén, when the boss says "move," they do. Thus the church never has had much long-term growth.

*To be continued . . . snake bites, floods, and robberies!*

*Dorcas Miller*

## Baptism in Mixcolajá

February 2, 2017, was a day of rejoicing and celebration for the church in Mixcolajá. Members were to be added to the church. Some traveled from a distance to join in the celebration. Others worked hard to provide a delicious meal as a symbol of welcome to their new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Two were baptized that day. Esmirna Urizar and Lorenzo de León were baptized and received into church fellowship. Both have their own stories of how Satan had them bound in sin and darkness and how Jesus came and rescued them, giving them life and hope. Esmirna hikes 1½ hours down the mountain every time she goes to church, which she does faithfully. Lorenzo's wife originally attended another evangelical church, but now

attends church with Lorenzo even though she has not embraced the Mennonite church and its practices.

Not only were two baptized that day, but Axel and Flor Lancerio were received into fellowship again after having become discouraged and leaving for a time. Lord willing, Gorgonia Cabrera will soon be received into church fellowship as well. Gorgonia is Esmirna's mother and was a member of the church years ago. Pray for each of these brothers and sisters that they would remain faithful to the Lord. Pray for their family members who are unsaved. Pray for the church in Mixcolajá that they would be encouraged to continue to follow the Lord in spite of discouragements and opposition.

*Sara Breneman*



**(L to R): Lorenzo and his family, Esmirna, Gorgonia, Flor and Axel**

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