



MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

Vol. LIV | No. 6

November, December 2019

Baptisms in Porvenir

September 8 was a beautiful day here in Porvenir, made more special by the privilege of witnessing three sisters baptized into the church of Jesus Christ. For the last eight months, instruction classes were held on Sunday afternoons right after the morning service.

Four were in instruction class. Reina, a mother of ten; Emily, a teenager who puts her heart into all she does; Freddy, a friendly, smiling fourteen-year-old; and Mariana, a young one in the faith.

We were all saddened when Freddy decided not to go through with baptism or continue in the ways of Jesus. Pray that God would continue to work in his heart.

We were blessed to have many visitors come and show their support on this special day. We enjoyed a yummy meal after the morning service and a time of fellowship together.



Mariana, Emily, and Reina were baptized in Porvenir.

A Day in the Life at Mission Headquarters

Good morning, thanks for joining us today! This morning the cook prepares a scrumptious breakfast of scrambled eggs, beans, fried plantains, and coffee. After breakfast, Irvin, the house-dad, leads in devotions by reading from Ecclesiastes 2.

After devotions, everyone proceeds to their agenda for the day. Elva, Ruth, and Marta are busy with cleaning and laundry. We had a number of guests yesterday, so the washing machines won't get much of a break today from all the towels and sheets.

Priscila, our secretary, is upstairs in her office doing secretarial duties. Wesley and Larry are at their desks, keeping some vital cogs of MAM running smoothly.

The house-mom, Eleanor, is making a grocery list before she and Irvin head to market. It's always nice to have fresh vegetables and fruits on hand again! Nathan is headed to Chimaltenango on a "chicken bus." He's the bookstore manager, so he's going for more books to restock. In between

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EDITORIAL

Wesley Hursh

Of Fences and Straying Cattle

What a sorry sight! The old barbed wire fence along the eastern edge of the property desperately needed repair. Many posts were rotted off, relying on the wires for support rather than supporting the wires. The wires were a rusty, sagging, patched-together tangle.

At first, this fence was not a problem. The gate across the road stayed open so the neighbors could drive through, and the neighborhood cattle freely roamed the road in front of our house. Then a couple of bulls learned they could jump across the cattle guard to get into our front yard—the grass *was* greener there, after all. This was obviously unacceptable because I wished the front yard to be a safe place for my two-year-old son to play. We would chase the bulls from the yard, down the road, and through the gate, which we would close behind them. This kept the neighborhood cattle in their place. But it was when we got our own cow and kept her and her calf in the pasture behind our house, next to the eastern fence, that the shortcomings of the fence became painfully obvious.

The bull pacing along the eastern fence was big, really big. And he wasn't going to let a bothersome barbed wire fence stop him from getting to the new cow in the neighbor's field. As he paced, he eyed the top strand of wire until he found the place where it sagged the lowest. Then he uncoiled his massive muscles in a mighty leap, over the wires and into our pasture! But because he was not inclined to jump any higher than absolutely necessary, his back hooves caught the top wire a little. This caused the wire to sag a good bit lower than before. At a beefy 2,000 pounds, he was an intimidating creature, but he did seem to have a healthy respect for men and the stones they threw. He was persuaded to jump back over the fence, and the wire sagged a little lower. A day or two later, he jumped back in and brought some of his companions with him across the now very low sag in the fence.

The solution to this situation was obvious.

A new fence was needed. The old rusty wire was pulled off and taken away, old posts were replaced with taller, straighter, stronger ones, and soon a much more imposing fence stood where the old one had been. The wires had a good, tight *twang*, and the new posts were planted solidly. The top wire was a foot higher than the previous one. The steel barbs glittered menacingly in the sunlight. And the bull hasn't gotten across that fence yet!

As I considered this story of the bull and our fence, I began to see some (uncomfortable) similarities to how I sometimes feel about the "fences" in my life.

I am smart. I don't plan to actually *do* anything sinful, but my mind might wander into scenes in which I would never participate in the real world. I might imagine the pleasure and freedom that seems so readily available "over there," but is forbidden because "the church says so" or "the Bible says it's wrong." And before I realize it, I'm scanning that fence with a critical eye, looking for justification that it should not be there at all.

I am strong. I'm not going to let a bothersome rule or regulation stop me from getting what I want. So I pace along the fence looking for a low place to get across, an opportunity to sneak into forbidden territory. And when that opportunity appears, I jump across and pursue the pleasure and happiness I covet. When the neighbor appears and throws some reprimands (rocks), I head back to my own pasture. *That didn't hurt*, I think. Now I know where to find the low fence and find it even easier to jump across. But then the neighbor puts up a taller, stronger fence, and I am forced to stay in the same boring pasture . . .

Even though I am physically prevented from trespassing, the desire to wander is still strong. I still pace along the fence from time to time, checking for weaknesses or low places. I gaze into the next pasture, where the company is much more fun and the boundaries appear less restrictive. I

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her cooking duties, Elsie is sewing dresses for the Mercy Room.

After lunch, Elva, Ruth, and Marta fold baskets of towels and make beds. Irvin and Nathan work in the shop, either crafting church pews or fixing something. Eleanor is baking delicious bread and sorting black beans.

Hermano Jorge comes to the kitchen for his snack of coffee and cookies. He's over ninety years old, but that doesn't stop him from coming to assist in the shop. We love having this cheerful,

honorary grandpa around!

Throughout the day, beggars come to the door for a plate of food or a sweater. We have a deal with them: they learn and recite a Bible verse and we give them a plate of food.

After supper we'll drive the five minutes to church for prayer meeting. Thanks for joining us in prayer for the work in Guatemala. Come by sometime; we love having visitors!

Elsie Miller



Fresh vegetables and fruit from the market.



Ruth working in the kitchen.



The shop where our tortillas are made.

Staff Changes

Norman Nolt completed his term of service with MAM in September. With many tears, the church in Porvenir bid him farewell. He flew back to the States on October 17. He has already been greatly missed. Pray for him as he seeks God's will for his future and finds his niche in the larger mission field of this world.

Editorial . . . continued

am where I belong, but I am not content and will bolt for "freedom" should the opportunity arise.

For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer [or bull]: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place (Hosea 4:16).

What a contrast! We can either be like cattle, always pushing at the fences and looking for a way out, discontent with what is freely available; or we can be like a lamb, contentedly grazing in a spacious pasture, secure in the care of the Good Shepherd.

We can imagine a different scenario. Let my heart be the "pasture" and my conscience the "fence." Perhaps my conscience hasn't been strengthened much recently. It stands in ragged disrepair. The "posts" of Biblical instruction are rotting off, and the "wires" of personal conviction have been stretched to the breaking point. The "bulls" of evil thoughts and temptations start entering my pasture with increasing regularity. I don't let them stay long before chasing them out, but they return more often and leave more slowly. They don't do much harm, and I gradually get used to seeing them grazing in my pasture. But one day the bulls don't run away. They charge with lowered horns and trampling feet. And I realize too late that these bulls are deadly. How much better it would have been to fix the fence

and keep those lustful imaginations out in the first place!

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:14-16).

When we sin, it is often because we didn't maintain our fences. We do well to heed the following advice from King Solomon.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil (Proverbs 4:23-27).

May our fences be strong, tight, and tall!



A new, tight fence does a much better job of dissuading intruders.

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Mennonite Air Missions (USPS 383-570)

Mennonite Air Missions newsletter is published bimonthly by Mennonite Air Missions, Inc. Editor / Mission representative: Brian Yoder, 590 Dusty Rock Rd., Riner, VA 24149; Mennonite Air Missions Board: Chairman: Duane Eby, 12731 Greencastle Pike, Hagerstown, MD 21740; Assistant Chairman: Wesley King, 30 Juliasam Dr., Belleville, PA 17004; Treasurer: Amos Hurst Jr., 140 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA. 17543; Secretary: Lee Lehman, 2065 Sollenburger Rd., Chambersburg, PA 17202; Urie Sharp, Leon Yoder, Pete Shirk, Stanley Neuenschwander, Jeff Weaver. The newsletter is sent free of charge. Send all newsletter correspondence to MAM Newsletter, 590 Dusty Rock Road, Riner, VA 24149. MENNONITE AIR MISSIONS is published on the fifteenth of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

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