



Guatemala, Central America

# MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" - Psalm 126:5

Vol. LVI | No. 1 | January, February 2021

## Cleanup in Coban

Hurricane Eta brought much destruction and devastation to Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala in early November. In central Guatemala, landslides buried everything in their path. Many people lost their lives. Days of rain caused flooding. *Guatemala Light and Truth* in Coban requested additional personnel to be more effective in helping their neighbors. A group of us from Guatemala City went to Coban on November 13 and returned the following day.

We shoveled lots of mud from houses with dirt floors. The mud was very sticky, like clay. We also helped remove furniture and other belongings from the mud. At one place we took the furniture out of the house and washed it with a garden hose. Everyone we helped was very grateful that no lives were lost in their town! Our help was greatly appreciated.

No one from MAM went the following week because a second hurricane, Hurricane Iota, was predicted. Iota made landfall just miles from the spot where Eta had made landfall less than two weeks earlier. By the time it reached Guatemala, it had slowed to a tropical storm. Again, there was much flooding in some areas of Guatemala.

In the next few weeks groups from Mixcolajá, San Bartolomé, El Guayabo, and Oratorio also went to help with cleanup and rebuilding.

We took some national youth from Guatemala City with us on November 30 through December 2. Carlos and Flor Lemus from Lirio de los Valles were there at

the same time.

The first day we cleaned the basement of a house that they had pumped water from for two days. It looked like a daunting task, but many hands made the work light. There was no drain, so all the water we used to scrub the muddy tile had to be bailed out by hand! At another location we picked up lots of debris and piled it to be burned. The men dragged water-logged mattresses to the same pile.

Brian and Randi Yoder and family did a great job of hosting us. *Muchas gracias!*

The Nationwide Fellowship churches from Chimaltenango and Las Lomas were also in Coban. They oversaw a food distribution effort funded by CAM and packaged food parcels. Each parcel weighed 25 pounds, and contained 10 lbs. of corn, 4 lbs. of rice, 2 lbs. of sugar, 2½ lbs. of oatmeal, one bottle of oil, and one package of beans. Some food parcels were delivered by pickup and others by helicopter.

One afternoon both groups entered an area that was previously impassable by vehicle to distribute food parcels and clean a church. The church building had been totally covered by water.

Our first job was to remove all the mud and fallen ceiling tiles. It was a huge job, but we had lots of help and the ladies from the community fed us well!

After the mud was out, we *gringos* thought we were finished because there was nowhere to hook up a

*(continued on page 3)*



Cleaning mud out of a church building in Coban.



Finished.



# EDITORIAL

Lester Burkholder

## The Brown Basilisk

Among the wide variety of animals and plants are some extraordinary species. Focusing on one species can be a fascinating learning experience. We marvel at God's creative hand while observing a brown lizard. We can also observe some spiritual parallels.

The brown or olive-brown basilisk is a lizard native to Central America from Panama to Guatemala and into Mexico. Basilisks can easily hide in the trees and bushes of lush forests near the edge of almost any body of water, but they also descend to the ground at times. God walked in the Garden of Eden seeking Adam and Eve who, because of guilt, were trying to hide from Him among the trees. Today He is still calling sinners to Himself, not only in Central America, but all over the world. It is useless to try to hide from God who not only sees us wherever we are but also knows our very thoughts.

Neither are Christians to hide their identity like a candle under a bushel among the people of the world. We are to be brightly beaming lights to a world lost in darkness. The church, a city set on a hill, cannot be hidden. So we must let our little lights shine.

Basilisks are omnivorous, eating plants, fallen berries, insects, and small animals. But they in turn are also eaten by predators. Snakes eat basilisk eggs. Larger lizards eat baby basilisks. Raptors like hawks and eagles eat basilisks at any stage. Basilisks are active during the day, and snakes that are active at night will sneak up on a sleeping basilisk and devour it before it can escape. Spiritual slumber will cause many to miss the call of the Bridegroom, and not be prepared for the return of Christ. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 7).

On land, basilisks increase their speed by running on their hind feet. They are the only lizard able to do this. God has given them this special ability to flee from danger. A depressed basilisk with its head hanging in despair could not run fast even if it did rise on its hind feet. We need to raise our heads in faith and confidence that God will enable us to "run the race set before us" as we keep our eyes fixed on Him.

These "Jesus lizards," as they are sometimes called, use their large webbed hind feet to trap small pockets of air under their feet and sprint across water. Jesus needed no pockets of air under His feet, and neither did Peter. Jesus did not run from a predator but walked on the water, inviting Peter to come out to meet Him. Jesus enables those who come to Him in faith to do otherwise impossible things. God enables us to learn

new languages, to answer the questions that seekers of truth pose to us, and to be content in whatever situation He calls us to serve. No basilisk ever crossed a body of water with the "I can't" attitude; neither will that attitude produce a successful soul-winner.

Although basilisks can escape predators by running across a body of water, they are in danger of being eaten by large fish from below or by birds of prey from above. "I am persuaded, that neither . . . height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38, 39). "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8). "The army of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him." Do we worry about things that are happening or that might never happen and begin to sink like Peter? If we begin to sink, we need to do like Peter and call to Jesus, "Lord, save me." And then pray, "Thank You, Jesus, for the speed and endurance You gave me."

Basilisks have some negative aspects too. They have long toes with sharp claws designed for clinging to tree branches and jumping from limb to limb. Psalm 1:3 and Jeremiah 17:8 describe godly people as trees planted by rivers of water. Am I a tree or a lizard clinging to the backs of the people of God and jumping from one "tree" to another for support, gouging the bark, and stripping leaves from the branches? We should be bearing fruits of righteousness in our season.

Unlike Jesus, basilisks are poisonous animals; Jesus is the great healer. Basilisks do not like to be handled very much and will bite when they are tired of being touched. Are we like Jesus who used His hands to restore sight, multiply food to the crowds who thronged Him, and bless children who sat upon His lap? Or are we like basilisks who become irritated by those who interrupt our plans and activities? Do our smiles turn upside down with these annoyances? Are we too touchy for a brother or sister to admonish us to a godlier walk with our Saviour?

These lizards only live about six years, in contrast to their eternal Creator. We are promised eternal life if we repent of our sins and trust Jesus enough to dedicate our entire lives to obeying His commandments. Although we may live threescore and ten or fourscore years, there remains an eternal rest to the people of God.

Our God has revealed some of the greatness of His infinite creative ability. Imagine the sights that await us in that eternal land of peace, joy, and happiness

*(continued on page 4)*



## Cleanup in Coban . . . continued

water hose. The locals suggested carrying water from a nearby stream. Soon *gringos* and Guatemalans alike were hauling water with buckets and a wheelbarrow. The rest of us used brooms and muscle power to scrub the floor. When we left, we had the satisfaction of a task well done and a new appreciation for all we have.

The people in this area have lost everything. Their stored corn got wet and sprouted. Their coffee plants were ruined by standing water. Please pray for all those affected by the hurricanes and flooding.

*Nathan & Delores Graybill*

CAM food distribution in Coban.



## Generations of Conflict

In the western highlands of Guatemala along the Pan American Highway live descendants of the Mayan Indians. Many live in adobe houses or cornstalk dwellings, much like their ancestors did a couple hundred years ago, although the North American influence is becoming more visible.

These people scratch a living from the steep mountainside fields or by making furniture or other things to sell. Some travel to work on the southern coast, where it is quite warm compared to the 7,500 feet elevation of their native mountains. On the hills and into ravines small footpaths are visible among the corn and wheat fields. It is a beautiful part of Guatemala and appears to be a peaceful area to live.

Along the Pan American Highway are the municipalities of Nahualá and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. These neighboring communities are home to people of the same culture and Quiché language. Some families have members in both communities.

To the north is a village called Pachipac. North of Pachipac is a high ridge called Alaska. On this ridge people from Pachipac have fields where they raise corn. Alaska is right on the border of the two municipalities, and both claim this land as their own. The conflict over land and water rights goes back to the 1800s. There have been some years of peace, but when the conflict revives, people get hurt or killed and property gets damaged.

Brother Diego Tziquin and his family have lived in Pachipac for generations and have land on Alaska. In 2019, they again planted corn there. The corn was growing well, and they were fertilizing it when the conflict became heated. The folks from Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán began shooting over them while they worked. They left their fields and have not been able to return. The war got so intense that Diego and his family considered leaving the area. Sometimes the conflict made it dangerous to be outside their house. Bullets were landing close by. A number of people were killed, included some of the Tziquin's extended family. Recently, the conflict around Pachipac has subsided.

Near the Pan American Highway just west of Nahualá is the village of Chirijox. At the edge of Chirijox is the Mennonite Church "El Aposento Alto" (The Upper Room). This congregation, which started in 1983, was an outreach of the congregation in Novillero. Brother Diego Tziquin, 72, is the deacon there. Chirijox is a divided community; part of the village is in Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, and the other part is in Nahualá. The church building is in Nahualá. The conflict in recent months has been in Chirijox.

The government of Guatemala declared a state of siege in the two municipalities in June and July. During that time, the army came in and found many guns, bombs, and ammunition. Those were confiscated and a few people were arrested, but the conflict continues. During the early part of the COVID-19 shutdown, there was concern that the church building would be burned. Praise the Lord, this has not happened. Brother Miguel Tambriz, a paralyzed widower, lives close by. His fam-

*(continued on page 4)*



Baltazar Tambriz's house was burned during the land conflict.

## Generations of Conflict . . . continued

ily also lives nearby, including his daughter Ana and her husband Jacinto, who care for Brother Miguel.

Earlier this year the fighting was near the church. Brother Jacinto's corn was growing nicely, but someone macheted it all down. Miguel and Jacinto had to move out for a while. On the other side of the municipality line lives the family of Baltazar Tambriz. Baltazar was Miguel's brother; he died a year ago. His widow, several children, and some grandchildren live there. In May of 2020, their house was burned during this conflict. A few other houses were burned as well, including a house where a young mother and her daughter perished.

During recent months there has been relative calm in the area. Occasionally there is another incident, and the army finds more bombs and guns. The vice president of Guatemala has been named as the person to negotiate peace in the region. The mayors of the two municipalities have had some face-to-face meetings, and some progress has been made. But generations of conflict cannot be resolved by meetings only. It takes a change of heart, forgiveness, and restitution to experience real peace.

Please pray for the peace of the dear people of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán and Nahualá. Pray that the Prince of Peace would enter their hearts and change their lives.

Pray for the small congregation at Nahualá. It is difficult when fighting divides communities and families. There is much fear and lack of trust in these communities. Brother Diego and his family used to walk the two kilometers to church, but they no longer feel safe doing so because they must cross into the neighboring municipality of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. Also, pray for the brethren who have lost their crops and their fields.

Since August, the community has allowed churches to hold services again, after being closed since March for the pandemic. Even when the area was in the "red zone," the authorities allowed services to continue. Brother Victor Ovalle is the bishop of the congrega-

tion and lives near Guatemala City. Brother Humberto Mux travels 3½ hours from Mixcolajá to hold services on Sundays. Brother Diego Tziquin is the deacon. Five families attend regularly. There is potential for growth in this congregation, but there is a need for local leadership—someone willing to live among the people and encourage them.

Yes, there have been generations of conflict between Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán and Nahualá, but I am confident that the Prince of Peace can bring peace to this region. Then the quiet, beautiful countryside can experience true peace.

*Wesley King*

## Financial Statement for Mennonite Air Missions

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

Beginning balance	\$ 45,393.58
Income	<u>542,199.96</u>
Actual Operating Income	\$587,593.54
Loan income	<u>0.00</u>
Total income	\$587,593.54
Disbursements	
Literature	0.00
Newsletter	8,938.43
Travel	10,720.94
Retirement and medical	4,379.00
Worker allowance	161,897.57
Bank & Misc. charges	342.42
Transfer to field	311,902.00
Supplies	1,478.96
U.S. checks for Guatemalan funds	<u>16,479.00</u>
Actual Operating Disbursements	\$516,046.32
Loan repayment	<u>0.00</u>
Total loan repayment	<u>0.00</u>
Ending Checkbook Balance	\$ 71,547.22

Thank you for your continued and generous support of MAM during the unpredictable and difficult year of 2020. Through your generosity, God has abundantly met the financial obligations the mission has faced during the last twelve months. May God "multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness" and provide "fruit that may abound to your account."

Amos Hurst - board treasurer  
12/31/2020

## The Brown Basilisk . . . continued

where there is no danger from any predator, such as a roaring lion who walks about seeking whom he may devour.

Newsletter subscriptions and address changes can be requested at [mam@christianlight.org](mailto:mam@christianlight.org).  
Visit our website at [mennoniteairmissions.org](http://mennoniteairmissions.org) to sign up for digital newsletters,  
or e-mail your request to [mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com](mailto:mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com).

Please make donations payable to "Mennonite Air Missions" and send to Mennonite Air Missions, c/o Amos Hurst, 140 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA 17543.

Mennonite Air Missions (USPS 383-570)

Mennonite Air Missions newsletter is published bimonthly by Mennonite Air Missions, Inc. Editor and vice-chairman: Brian Yoder, 590 Dusty Rock Rd., Riner, VA 24149; Mennonite Air Missions Board: Chairman: Duane Eby, 12731 Greencastle Pike, Hagerstown, MD 21740; Field Representative: Wesley King, Guatemala City.; 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, Keith Crider. 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.  
ATTN. POSTMASTER: Send address subscription changes or change of address materials to MENNONITE AIR MISSIONS, PO Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.