

School Updates

San Bartolomé dedicated their new school building on January 14 and began classes there on the 17th. In Oratorio, many hands are busy working to make their new school building a reality. San Cristobal did some very quick work to open a new school, Escuela Emanuel, with Oglá López as their teacher. The El Guayabo School began classes in January after a two-year hiatus. May God prosper the work of these schools!



Dedication service for the San Bartolomé school.



Celebrating the founding of a new school in San Cristobal.

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Staff Changes

Jonathan and Sheryl Bear arrived in January. They will be serving in Santa Rosita where Jonathan served as a single man a few years ago. The Bears come from Sharon Mennonite Church in Elida, Ohio.



Jonny and Sheryl Bear



Tristan Martin

Conrad and Kathy Miller and their two children, Heidi and Alex, arrived in January. They will be serving in San Bartolomé. They come from the Pleasant Valley New Order Amish church in Sugarcreek, Ohio.



Conrad and Kathi Miller



The Drunk With the Watermelon Knife

For nearly a week we had watched the preparations for Don Pollo's birthday party. Stones were spread and trash cleaned up to make a nice spot down by the river. Bright and early on Saturday, people gathered to prepare food. They butchered a large cow, and I could hear them chopping up meat for hours. Then a pig was butchered. Saturday night they had the first party, this one only for the men. They served *caldo de coche* (pig soup) and, of course, it's not a party without some alcohol. Thankfully, the loud music and most of the noise quit by 10:00 that night.

We were awakened a little before 4:00 a.m. Sunday morning by a five-to-ten-minute firecracker display. It is customary to awaken the birthday person with firecrackers at 4:00 a.m. It usually doesn't last for ten minutes, but everyone knows that Don Pollo loves firecrackers. Who else in town shoots off as many firecrackers as Don Pollo's family to celebrate Christmas?

The whole town, plus many more of his friends, were invited for lunch. There must have been about 200 people served at lunchtime. We enjoyed the grilled beef, rice, steamed veggies, and tortillas along with the rest of the crowd. After the cake was served in the afternoon, most guests dispersed and left. While we were gathering for supper, we noticed some very drunk men going by or being taken home on motorcycles. It seemed kind of early in the day to be that drunk, but we had noticed a group of men off to the side of the party who appeared to be drinking.

We had just finished our supper but were still gathered around the table when we heard someone shuffling around on the porch. Dean went to

the screen door to see if he could show the man where the road was. He was not someone we knew. Like many drunks do, he was crying and saying, "Help me. Help me." He showed no signs of being *bravo* (angry). Meanwhile, I heard a cycle stop at the end of the driveway and a voice said, "Let him alone, gringo." Dean heard it and turned to come inside and close the door. At the same time the drunk came charging for the door with his bottle raised.

A flimsy screen door won't stop an enraged drunk, and just like that, he was through the door! Thankfully, he tripped and fell, and we ladies had a few seconds to grab children and hide behind locked doors. When he fell, he lost his bottle, which rolled under the kitchen cupboard. But instead of the bottle, he grabbed the knife that was lying on the sink! I had used it to cut up a watermelon for supper. Dean and Anthony were his targets.

Several of Don Pollo's sons must have been at the end of our lane because they were at the door almost instantly. One came inside, but as soon as he saw the knife, he was back out the door. Anthony tried to grab the drunk's hands to take the knife or to back him out the door. In the tussle Anthony got stabbed in the back of the shoulder.

Somehow the drunk broke past the men and ran back the hall to one of the bedrooms, still carrying the knife. Dean called out to us from his hiding place to make sure we were okay. He had no idea which rooms we were in and if we were safe. It seemed like the drunk was going to stay where he was for the moment, so we quickly ran

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EDITORIAL

Darrel Dyck

The Brotherly Crutch

It happened one day while my father-in-law was shopping. Spotting the item he wanted high on a shelf, he made his way over to it. Just in front of him stood a shorter man who seemed to be very much in thought. The man did not seem to notice my father-in-law. So after repeating “excuse me” three times, my father-in-law, who is 6’ 6” and has long arms, reached up over the man and took the item he wanted. The man was startled out of his reverie and turned to see what was looming over him. Realizing that his height was about perfect to fit under my father-in-law’s arm, he commented, “Wow, I could be your crutch!”

As I thought on this man’s words, I couldn’t help but think of the spiritual applications one could draw from this event. How humbling to suggest that you could be someone’s crutch! It is not our human tendency for that to be the first thing on our minds. But isn’t that exactly what Christians ought to be—a crutch for one another? When Paul wrote to the Philippians, I believe this is exactly what he had in mind.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:1-5).

We live in a world where people point fingers and run others down (strife) in their effort to get to the top (vainglory). As Christians, we are not to be that way. Paul questions our experience in Christ by asking (in my own words), “Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any beautiful fellowship in the Spirit? And how about tenderheartedness and compassion? Are these not all the different comforts you’ve experienced in Christ? And if so, pass them on to those around you, especially to the church.”

Paul wasn’t just rattling something off the top of his head that he thought might work. He reminds us that this is the example Jesus left us. In the rest of this well-known passage, Paul goes on to remind us that Jesus was more than just a humble crutch; He willingly died for all mankind.

What does being a crutch look like? Sometimes being a crutch means abstaining from things that causes those around us to stumble. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification (Romans 15:1, 2).* We have likely all experienced some area of weakness in our lives and have needed a “crutch.” Perhaps while struggling to stay clear of things that tempted us, an experienced friend sensed our weakness and voluntarily did without or took the long way around to help and support us.

Sometimes “being a crutch” means being extra careful how we say things. Simply “saying it how it is” is much easier and doesn’t take much thought, but we need to speak thoughtfully and gently.

At times being a crutch means lending a listening ear. There are many young people trying to find their place in life, many tired and discouraged mothers, and many heavily burdened fathers. Often, people aren’t looking for answers but for someone to talk to.

One might think that the elderly are past the struggles of life, yet many sit in loneliness day after day feeling worthless. They have so much experience to impart to us. Just taking the time to sit with them and listen becomes a crutch to both us and them. Our visitations should also include the widows and fatherless (James 1:27). Perhaps these are more often neglected because they cannot easily return the favor (Luke 14:12-14).

Being a crutch means supporting our ministry team. There are different ways to do this, but perhaps most important is upholding them in prayer. Our ministry teams face temptations, discouragement, and weariness, often to a greater degree

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The Drunk With the Watermelon Knife . . . continued

out of the house. In my scramble to grab the baby and Kara, I didn’t realize a knife was involved until I raced out of the house and stepped across the “evidence” splattered on the floor.

Several men were with Anthony on the porch, trying to stop the bleeding. When we had escaped, all the doors to the house were closed, with the drunk still in a back bedroom. We jumped in the pickup and took Anthony to the nurse who lives in our village. Meanwhile, a group of men stayed at the house to guard it.

Thankfully, the nurse was able to stitch up Anthony’s shoulder wound and a small cut on his hand. There was some concern because it started bleeding again after she was done. But after applying pressure and being reassured by a nurse from El Chal, we took Anthony to his house and started making preparations to spend the night with him.

While we were at the clinic waiting with Anthony, the men guarding our house were able to get the drunk man to come out. They convinced him to leave his “weapons” (the knife and two metal tubes he had found) in the house and eventually shut him up somewhere else. We were finally able to get settled for the night at Anthony’s house. Dean checked on Anthony every two hours. Praise the Lord, the bleeding never started up again.

At 11:00 p.m. some vehicles went down to the

The Brotherly Crutch . . . continued

because of their leadership role. Satan knows that if he can weaken leaders, the church will also be weakened.

There are many ways we can fulfill our role as a crutch. I would like to close by reminding us of what being a crutch means to Jesus. The righteous on His right hand at Judgment Day will say to Him, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?* And He will reply, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matthew 25:37, 38, 40).*

river. We later heard that they gave the drunk a bath in the river and that he spent the night with his uncle, not far from where we were sleeping. The next morning, he was sent to his home several hours away. They say that when not intoxicated, he is a nice and friendly man. But he is known to be very dangerous when drunk because he also uses drugs. He had been carrying a pistol but had handed it off to someone else to guard before he got drunk. It appears that he had learned at least one thing through experience.

The next morning, the now-sobered man wanted to come talk to us, but those guarding him wouldn’t allow it. He says he wants to come talk to us someday, and you can pray we would know what to say if he does. We want to communicate to him that we are not his enemies and that he is forgiven.

When we took Anthony back to the clinic Monday morning, the nurse poked and prodded and declared that the wound seemed to be sealed off very well. Anthony never experienced much pain, although the wound seemed rather deep.

We are very thankful for God’s protection and believe that only a miracle kept us from choosing to hide in the same room where the drunk chose to hide! Also, that he tripped inside the door, giving us a few seconds of time, and that the men that were right there to help. We are thankful that this is probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We do not feel that he was targeting us at all. We just happened to be the first house up the road from the celebration. Also he lives hours away. This is not a Nicaraguan robbery story that will probably happen over and over again. God’s guardian angels are busy every day. It’s only by God’s grace that we are all here.

I may never again be able to use a big kitchen knife and leave it lying on the counter in plain sight. When darkness comes, we still hear noises and get a little nervous. But it is worth going through this experience if it can change one person’s heart. Ultimately, only God’s power can change hearts, and that is the only thing that will change this village. We are only instruments in His hands.

Thank you for your prayers! Please keep praying that we can leave a clear testimony in our village, for the salvation of souls through this event, and especially for the man who caused the whole story. Only God’s saving grace can free him from his bondage!

Jodi Boll