



Mensajeros de Misericordia

It was a refreshing place for a picnic in the steamy heat of southern Guatemala. A narrow dirt road ran beside the river, flanked by shady trees and lush grass. Far from our home in the Quiché mountains, our group was ravenous, sweaty, and in a goofy mood. The girls began chopping lettuce and tomatoes for lunch while the boys sprawled in the grass to wait. Then a police truck appeared.

"You folks be careful here," he told the boys. "There are thieves in the area, and I must warn you." He then left us in a cloud of dust.

"Aw, let 'em come; I'm not worried," one young man said, settling more comfortably into the grass. "They wouldn't hurt us."

So we stayed. Someone walking by eyed us carefully. "Did those police tell you that there are bad thieves here?" she asked. "He shouldn't just leave you here; he should be protecting you. Those thieves will take all your phones and money."

That warning worked. In less than two minutes, the youth were crammed into the big green van again—lettuce, tomatoes, and all.

It was only the second day of our chorus tour, but the youth were already weary of traveling in the stuffy van and bumping down little back roads in search of a place to eat. Back on the main road again, Nick suddenly pulled the van off onto a grassy clearing. "We are going to stop being picky about where we are going to eat. I'm hungry, and we are eating here. No complaints, anyone."

But upon opening the door, a dreadful odor permeated the van. "Oh, yuck, there's a dump somewhere! Let's get out of here!" So we did, in a hurry.

What is it like to take a chorus tour in Guatemala in

a bulging fifteen-passenger van? You might want to try it someday. It's rewarding. Try stuffing fifteen people (mostly cousins), luggage, sound equipment, and lots of laughter into one space for about forty-nine hours of travel time.

But first you need to bring everyone together to learn new songs, get over stage fright, and raise money by growing and selling a corn crop. Then you buy an arm-load of fabric and shirts (after sorting out all the opinions and heated discussions). You count the money you have left from the corn harvest and decide together that you can only buy the cheapest food at little tiendas along the way. You will need to schedule programs with churches all over Guatemala and find a van to rent, because the mission van you had planned to use has a sudden illness. On the last day, you carefully iron and fold everyone's program shirts and dresses (thirty pieces in all) and pack a little first aid kit for all the headaches and other ailments that happen. But most importantly, you pray that your voices and testimonies would be pleasing and honoring to God and turn other people to Him.

The first program given by the Mensajeros de Misericordia (Messengers of Mercy) chorus was on June 27 at MAM Headquarters. The next morning, we headed toward the southwestern coast of Guatemala, (and yes, we did eventually find a place to eat after stopping at the dump) to give a program in El Guayabo. We were blessed to see people from several of the southern churches there. We returned to the mission to spend the night.

The next day, after sleeping in and buying food along the way, we found ourselves heading east, laboring up steep switchback curves. As we drove down into shaded

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The "Messengers of Mercy" chorus from the Quiché region.



EDITORIAL

Justin Zimmerman

How to Pray for a Thief

"They stole the fence!" I could hardly believe my eyes at first. But fifteen nice new wooden posts were gone, "replaced" with about five of the rotten old ones we had thrown aside a few months ago that were propping up the barbed wire. It had been hard work to install those new fence posts, and now . . . well, let's just say I do *not* enjoy any aspect of working on barbed wire fence!

Just a few weeks before, someone had taken my wife's phone while we were visiting in Santa Rosita (remarkably, it was later returned). Then the fence posts behind the church in Mixcolajá was stolen. A few weeks later, one of our brothers in Guatemala City suddenly had very unwelcome company with him in the van. The thief made off with about a \$100 in broad daylight. More recently, we concluded that someone was milking our cows in the woods at night and have taken to keeping the cows close to the house to discourage further milk theft.

Thankfully, theft and robbery are not very common in most of Guatemala, but our recent experiences have made us think otherwise. Of course, this is not just a problem in Guatemala or Central America. Theft is a problem the world over. I don't like others taking "my" things. When I discovered our wrecked fence, my shock gave way to some quite unchristian thoughts. But after the initial rush of emotion had passed, I was able to think calmly and pray.

How should someone pray when they have been robbed? Perhaps Psalm 6:10 would work: *Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.* Perhaps. Or maybe David's proclamation in Psalm 7:14-16: *Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.*

But maybe we should turn to the New Testament for guidance. Jesus said, *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you* (Matthew 5:44). Well, that certainly isn't as natural as wishing for a stolen fence post to fall off the packhorse and break the thief's foot, but Jesus clearly said to pray for those who "despitefully use you." It isn't natural to love your enemies, but that is what we are instructed to do. And the One who gave those instructions also gave us an example. He loved us "while we were yet sinners"—enemies! He didn't give just instructions and an example, He also enables us to do this. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me* (Philippians 4:13).

So I am praying that the thief who stole the fence develops a conscience and repents of his sin, because God is . . . *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Besides, this is a reminder that I must keep watch. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of*

persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13). No thieves in the new earth! No locks or security systems needed! A world where righteousness dwells. Keep watch until that day!

WATER Team, 2022

SMBI's WATER program (World Awareness Training in Evangelistic Responsibility) is intended to give "on the field" exposure to young people considering mission work. After a week of classroom instruction, individuals are sent to various mission locations around the world for about a month. They may "shadow" missionaries distributing aid, help with projects, or help with the mundane tasks a busy missionary mom may struggle to get done in a day. Regardless of what they do, they generally come away with a much better idea of what life on the mission field is like.

Three young ladies came to MAM on the WATER program in June and July. Amanda Newswenger, Andrea Wise, and Lucinda Shirk took a few days of Spanish school, then experienced Guatemalan culture as they spent time at various mission stations. They helped with painting projects at headquarters and in El Novillero, toured the school in Oratorio, spent time in the cool mountains of Quiché and the steamy Peten jungle, and worshipped in six MAM churches during their stay. We trust that God will use these experiences to enrich their lives and prepare them for service in His kingdom, wherever that may be!



WATER students Amanda Newswenger, Andrea Wise, and Lucinda Shirk (left to right).

Mensajeros de Misericordia . . . continued

coves where trees made a dappled canopy overhead, and lush banks of guisquil vines spread out before us, the youth were awed with the beauty of my childhood home. But after the program, we all felt a burden to pray especially for this area. Would you help us to pray that Satan's power would be held back, and that the church could grow in San Sur?

We left the city in the wee hours of the next day, driving north on smooth, flat roads to Santa Rosita, near the Mexican border. Our trip this time took over twelve hours and included a boat ride upriver to the mission house, during which we were drenched by a storm. We enjoyed our program there, as well as spotting an alligator and befriending spider monkeys.

When Saturday came, we were all ready for a break. Most of the group went to the Tikal ruins to spend the day before driving to El Chal. Our last tour program would be held there on Sunday evening. We enjoyed our stay but really looked forward to being home again—an eleven-hour drive away.

At every outpost we were treated with good food and precious fellowship. The youth of Mixcolajá now know more about what the rest of Guatemala is like and what a blessing it is to bless others. Please pray that they would always use their talents for God's glory. *Wendy Martin*

Oratorio School Project

The building project in Oratorio is finally making some visible progress. Months of earthmoving didn't leave much to see, but in recent weeks, concrete footers have been poured and block walls erected. There is still much work to do, but the new school is beginning to take shape! Thank you to all who have given support to this project through your donations of money and labor.



Hard-won progress on the school construction.

Introducing the Mixcolajá Staff



Justin and Lynnae Zimmerman are from Turbotville, Pennsylvania. Justin serves as commissioned pastor in Mixcolajá and helps with administrative work.



Joy Zimmerman is from Turbotville, Pennsylvania, and teaches school in Mixcolajá.



Wendy Martin is from Edinburg, Virginia, and serves as missionary and schoolteacher in Mixcolajá.



Nicholas Suarez is from Kenton, Tennessee. He serves as commissioned pastor and school administrator in Mixcolajá.

Prayer and Praise Items

Pray for wisdom for the missionaries and administration of MAM.

Pray for health (spiritual, physical, mental) for the workers on the field.

Praise God for working in and through the Mensajeros de Misericordia youth chorus.

Praise God for ready hands and sufficient funds for the Oratorio school project.

Baptism in San Bartolomé

It was starting to rain, but that didn't deter the twenty-three people who piled into our pickup truck for an hour-long ride to San Bartolomé. The reason? To witness the baptism of two young girls and the receiving of a young couple back into fellowship. As we bumped and jostled our way along the rutted dirt road, I felt sorry for the fourteen people crammed into the bed of the pickup and wondered if it was going to be worth the trip for them. Thankfully, though the sky threatened rain most of the way, we got to the church still mostly dry. We arrived a few minutes late but were still in plenty of time since the service started a half hour late!

We weren't the only ones who traveled a long way to be there. Most of the Nahualá church—a three-hour

drive away—was there, and the guest speaker was Victor Ovalle, from Guatemala City. The Monte de los Olivos Church in San Bartolomé holds a big place in Victor's heart since he and his wife labored for many years caring for the flock there. It was with tears of joy that he reverently baptized Lesly Benito and Enma Cael and welcomed them and Gabriel and Priscila Ramirez into fellowship with the church.

The service was a solemn, holy time as many people present were reminded of the vows they had taken before God and the church, although sadly many of them have been drawn away by the cares or enticements of the world. To many more, the joy and peace that could be felt in this sacred place served as a witness to what they could experience in their own hearts if they would only surrender themselves to Christ.

After the service, everyone eventually made their way to the kitchen where they were served fried chicken with rice and plenty of tortillas. With full stomachs and glad hearts, twenty-three people piled back into the pickup for the ride home . . . just as it began to rain! We eventually dropped each person off, wet, bedraggled, and ready for their warm bed. They each wished us a good night, and with a smile, dashed off through the rain to their homes. I have to say, the much-needed rain sounded better on the tin roof after we were warm and safe in our beds than it had all the way home. But the warm feeling we each carried in our hearts from the experiences of the evening hadn't diminished one bit.

Lynnae Zimmerman



Lesly, Enma, Priscila, and Gabriel (left to right) were received into fellowship.

Staff Changes

We have been blessed with new workers. Maggie Miller arrived in July to help with domestic duties in Headquarters for four months. She comes from Hebron Mennonite Church in Hartsville, Ohio. Kimberly Burkholder, from the Muddy Creek congregation in Denver, Pennsylvania, arrived in August. She will serve as the schoolteacher in Santa Rosita.



Maggie Miller



Kimberly Burkholder

Correction

The previous issue mistakenly exchanged the captions identifying Anthony Wadel and Quinton Burkholder. Sorry about the confusion!

The previous issue also entirely omitted pictures of the Mixcolajá team from the "Meet the Staff" feature. We present them in this issue.

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