



## Adjustments

Moving to a foreign land requires adjustments . . . many adjustments! Upon moving to Guatemala, a new missionary from the United States or Canada will face many changes. While some of these things may be daunting and difficult, other adjustments occur without conscious effort. A good sense of humor helps, but most of all, the grace of God is sufficient in all cases. The following list is based upon one person's perspective and experience, which may differ widely from another's.

**Language:** Recently, MAM has been very blessed to have several missionaries arrive that already speak Spanish fluently. But for the majority of the North American staff, language learning is the single most difficult aspect of life in Guatemala. It certainly was and is for me! Spanish is a relatively easy language for English speakers to learn, and it seems that those who also speak Pennsylvania Dutch develop language skills quite quickly. But mastery of Spanish still requires study, practice, and much humility, and will involve asking many questions and navigating many misunderstandings.

**Time:** In the United States or Canada, punctuality is usually quite important (sometimes too important?). In Guatemala, things are much more laid back. Missionaries and nationals alike have a long-standing joke about "la hora del chapin," or "the hour of the Guatemalan," meaning that as long as you arrive within an hour of the appointed time, you are not late!

**Church services:** Worship services may or may not start on time, but chances are that people will trickle in during the opening hymns. And it is very likely that the preacher will preach nearly twice as long as a preacher in the States, usually an hour or more. You will probably eventually get used to the hard benches.

**Funerals:** Burials usually happen within twenty-four to thirty-six hours. Embalming is rare unless the person died at the hospital. The bereaved family hosts a large crowd of friends, neighbors, and extended family, serving supper that evening and setting up lights and rented chairs for the wake. Often, unbelieving family members or friends will

try to drown their grief with alcohol. The burial of an unbeliever, or one that involves an unbelieving family, is typically accompanied by much drama, such as throwing oneself on the coffin, loud wailing, or fainting.

**Religion:** Religion is big. Holy living is rare. Crosses and religious mottos are everywhere. Every town has a Catholic cathedral, even small villages usually have multiple evangelical churches. But a consistent Christian witness is sadly hard to find.

**Music:** Obviously, living next to a neighbor that plays loud and ungodly music is difficult, but living near an evangelical church can be almost as bad. The music style of the evangelical churches is similar to the racket heard from the local bar, and the church's is usually louder!

**Neighbors:** Love thy gringo neighbor as thyself, and know all his business, his comings and goings, and exactly how many gifted tortillas they throw out to the chickens . . . Privacy is a foreign concept to most Guatemalans, which is not always bad, but it sure can be trying at times for those of us who grew up in the woods or on a sprawling farm!

**Animals:** Animals roam free. Mangy dogs in the kitchen, scrawny chickens in the bedroom, bony cows in the front yard, derelict horses wandering the street. Another twist to this adjustment is remembering not to kick your brother-in-law's expensive dog out of the way when on furlough.

**Farming:** Farming is done by hand. Tractors may be used in some flat areas, but mostly just for plowing. Just about anything can be grown in Guatemala, depending on climate, altitude, availability of water, and the quality of the fences to keep the hungry animals out.

**Jobs:** A steady year-round job is highly coveted. Pay is generally poor, and most jobs are seasonal or cyclical, like farming or construction. Schoolteachers are often the most well-to-do members of the community or congregation, as they get paid a fixed monthly salary, even when school is out.

**Money:** Because it takes more than 7.5 quetzales

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# EDITORIAL

Dustin Hartzler

## Missionary Education

What is a missionary? Is he someone who lives on the mission field? Is a good missionary an orator who can explain deep doctrinal truths? A “prayer warrior,” who constantly practices 1 Timothy 2:1? Is he a philosopher, who understands clearly all the difficult passages in the Bible? Is he more of a hands-on person, who works tirelessly to improve the living conditions of those less fortunate than himself? What specific gifts and abilities does it take to be a good missionary?

I think that a missionary is a person with a mission to accomplish. God called Jonah to be a missionary—and God defined the mission. Jonah’s assignment was huge—preach destruction to 120,000 people. I probably would have run away too. It’s a little ironic, though, that one of the most successful missionary ventures recorded in the Bible was performed singlehandedly by one of the most unwilling missionaries recorded, and that, after his preaching saved forty times more people than Peter’s message at Pentecost, he was extremely disappointed with the success.

Why did Jonah’s preaching bring results? Was it his love? No, he did not have any. Was it his eloquence? No. And why didn’t God find a better missionary after the first one ran away? It seems that God particularly wanted Jonah to bring the message to the people of Nineveh.

God had much to teach Jonah during his mission. When Jonah ran from God, God showed Himself to be all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful. God’s three-day training session with Jonah taught him that running from God is a mistake and that those who do so will regret it. But Jonah also learned that God is full of mercy. He is there for us even after we have made mistakes and He is able to turn those mistakes into growing experiences.

After this training session, God had the fish swim near the shore before it developed a bad case of seasickness, thus returning Jonah to land. This showed Jonah that God can easily perform whatever is necessary to further His cause. But in Nineveh, Jonah also discovered what he had feared—that God is indeed gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and that He repents Himself of the evil

that we deserve. God gave Jonah a mission because Jonah needed the experience. God was concerned about the large city of Nineveh, but He was also concerned about Jonah. He knew that Jonah needed a better perspective of God, himself, and others, and God decided to teach Jonah this by sending him on the mission.

God has given each of us a mission. Maybe we run from it at times. Maybe we also need that three-day training session in the belly of a fish. Maybe we perform our mission half-heartedly, but we all have a mission. We are all called to be missionaries. We are all on the mission field—Earth. God designed us to serve Him and each other, and He has things for each of us to learn along the way.

John the Baptist was a missionary. He was more enthusiastic and positive than Jonah, so intent on preaching that when he was questioned about his identity, he simply said that he was a voice preparing the way of the Lord. He identified himself by his mission. But God had a training session for John as well. Though he had done no wrong, John went to prison when he passionately wished to be preaching the Gospel. In prison, John faced discouragement. After recently preaching Jesus as the Christ, he now wanted evidence that it was true. Jesus could have sent an angel to free John, as He did later for Peter, but He chose not to. He had things for John to learn. He sent this message to John: *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.* John was experiencing a training session on faith. This training session continued until his life ended a short time later.

So it is for us. God has given each of us a mission, a work, and a place to fill—regardless of our past. He also has many things to teach us—regardless of our past. Often the mission and the learning come together. We do not necessarily complete either in this life. It is not primarily about us completing it, but about God completing His work in us. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen* (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

# Senior Trip

From March 21-29, nineteen of us seniors from the Southeastern Mennonite Conference, plus two sponsor couples, went to Guatemala for our senior trip. We did a lot of sightseeing and shopping. We also went to El Porvenir for two days where the guys helped Joshua Martin excavate for his new house while we girls helped the native women make food.

Over the weekend, we split up into two groups. One group went to Oratorio and helped clean and work around the church. The other group went to San Bartolomé and Mixcolajá and helped with various projects there.

Overall, it was a very good trip for me. I had never been to a different country before, and it was good for me to experience that. I enjoyed it so much more than I ever thought I would, even though my Spanish speaking ability was quite terrible! It was fascinating to me to watch the mission people relate to the natives.



They do a good job of reaching out to them. They seem so happy and content to be where God has called them, and that is a blessing and a challenge to me to also be content wherever God may call me. *Janet Hobbs*

## Adjustments . . . continued

to equal a dollar, you may find yourself carrying and spending an alarmingly large wad of cash for certain purchases. And the USD to GTQ exchange rate will suddenly become much more interesting.

**Borrowing/lending:** “Give to him that asketh of thee, and ask him not for repayment” seems to be quoted much more frequently than “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Banks charge exorbitant rates for their loans, but many private lenders charge even more, and many a Guatemalan is hopelessly in debt. Imagine paying off a loan with a 24 percent rate! Borrowing tools is also very popular.

**Water:** You will quickly get used to the *pila* (a concrete water reservoir and sink) unless you have to scrub your laundry by hand in one. (Thankfully, most of us missionaries now have washing machines available to us.) You will also discover how to live without running water at times, as water lines frequently break. Water abounds in some areas of Guatemala, while it is quite scarce in others, especially during dry season. In any case, it is strongly recommended to drink only the filtered water that comes in big blue jugs. A word to the wise is sufficient.

**Food:** Meat is a treat. While most might have

chicken a few times a month, beef and pork are more of an annual treat, perhaps for Christmas and New Year’s. Dairy products tend to be more of a luxury item than a staple. Tropical fruits are plentiful, and fresh produce in general is available all year. Canning or freezing fruit is almost completely unknown (and unnecessary). Also, avocados are cheap.

**Cooking:** Making tortillas is an art. So is cooking over a wood fire. Do not expect to ever achieve the

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An adobe house is a typical rural dwelling.

## Staff Needs

We need believers willing to live simply and commit themselves to building the church of Jesus Christ in another culture. Here are some of the available areas of service.

- ✦ Office worker/bookkeeper (Mission headquarters)  
→ Major tasks: banking, bookkeeping, financial administration
- ✦ Houseparents (Mission headquarters)  
→ Major tasks: Headquarters oversight, hospitality
- ✦ Single man (Mission headquarters)  
→ Building and vehicle maintenance, airport runs, etc.
- ✦ Single man (San Cristobal)  
→ Work with Victor Ovalle as driver and helper
- ✦ Single man (Santa Rosita)  
→ Personal worker
- ✦ Single ladies (headquarters, potentially other outposts)  
→ Domestic, teaching school, personal work
- ✦ Couples/families (outposts)  
→ Serve and provide leadership for outlying congregations

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### Adjustments . . . continued

level of skill that every Guatemalan housewife seems to have in these arts! And don't be offended if you overhear whispers of "Where are the tortillas?" when you have a native family over for "American" food.

**Houses:** Wood, dirt, or concrete? Their house's building material is a fairly reliable way to gauge a family's relative wealth. Wood houses are very poor, adobe houses are poor, adobe plastered with cement is better, and concrete houses are best, although concrete houses vary widely from small and plain to large and ostentatious. Kitchens are separate from the rest of the house, which usually consists of a couple of bedrooms with a porch. Floors may be dirt, rough concrete, or tile. Doorways are not built for tall gringos. Doorways may not even have doors, just curtains! Privacy is often next to impossible (see "Neighbors").

*Justin Zimmerman*

*[To be continued in next issue]*

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or e-mail your request to [mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com](mailto:mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com).

## Staff News

Nicholas Suarez and Vivian Bontrager were married on April 8, 2023, in Virginia. They will be living in Mixcolajá, where Nicholas is serving as part of the ministry team. May God richly bless this new home!



Wedding day for Nick and Vivian



## Prayer and Praise Items

Pray for new staff to serve at headquarters in Guatemala City and various outposts.

Pray for the few Guatemalan youth, that they may be faithful.

Praise God for safety for our staff, recent work crews, and visitors!

Praise God for His written Word that we can own and study in freedom.

Please make donations payable to "Mennonite Air Missions" and send to Mennonite Air Missions, c/o Amos Hurst, 116 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA 17543. Inquiries about service opportunities may be directed to Brian Yoder at [yoder4@gmail.com](mailto:yoder4@gmail.com) or 590 Dusty Rock Rd., Riner, VA 24149

Mennonite Air Missions (USPS 383-570)

Mennonite Air Missions newsletter is published bimonthly by Mennonite Air Missions, Inc. Editor: Brian Yoder, 590 Dusty Rock Rd., Riner, VA 24149; Mennonite Air Missions Board: Chairman: Duane Eby, 12731 Greencastle Pike, Hagerstown, MD 21740; Treasurer: Amos Hurst Jr., 116 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA. 17543; Secretary: Lee Lehman, 2065 Sollenburger Rd., Chambersburg, PA 17202; Vice Chairman: Keith Crider; Pete Shirk, Stanley Neuenschwander, Wesley King, David Martin, Darel Myers. Emeritus member: Urie Sharp. 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.