



Commissioning in Santa Rosita

On May 17, 2024, around forty-five people from six churches gathered in the thatch-roofed church building in the tiny village of Santa Rosita. Dean and Jodi Boll, who have been serving in the church in Santa Rosita for the last six years, return to Pennsylvania in May, and Johnny and Sheryl Bear are taking up the work of the church. This special evening service was to commission Johnny as pastor.

The youth group, swelled by visitors, sang several hymns during the service. "The Cross is Not Greater Than His Grace" was a special song for a commissioning service: God's grace is sufficient, no matter the person or the task to which he is called.

Larry Martin shared a message directed at three audiences: the pastor, the pastor's wife, and the congregation. Johnny's role is to teach, to feed, to lead, and to serve. He and the congregation will be blessed by Sheryl's support and good example. The respect,

care, and brotherly love of the congregation will make his work much easier.

Isaías Muñoz gave the pastoral charge, assisted by Larry and Dean. He shared his appreciation for Johnny and Sheryl's willingness to serve, and for Dean and Jodi's years of service.

The church in Santa Rosita is small but has several long-term, dedicated members faithfully serving the Lord. Johnny has put a lot of effort and vision into developing the small church school, but has now handed off most of the school and youth leader responsibilities to Quinton Burkholder.

Johnny and Sheryl's time will be dedicated to pastoring the church and serving as houseparents to the VS folks who share in the work.

Andrew Crider



The youth sang at the commissioning service.



Johnny and Sheryl Bear, Dean and Jodi Boll



EDITORIAL

Justin Zimmerman

Shall the Prey Be Taken From the Mighty?

A fishing osprey is a most spectacular sight to see. A masterful flyer, like the eagle or hawk, an osprey soars, glides, circles, even briefly hovers with ease high above the surface of the water. Like all raptors, it has keen eyesight, which makes this bespectacled writer envious. What's more, its specialized vision accounts for the visual distortion of objects below the water surface, such as swimming fish. Perhaps spear and bow fishermen should be more envious than I!

When the osprey spots the flash of a fish near the surface, it plunges downward from as high as 40 meters. Unlike other birds that dive for fish, the osprey plunges into the water feet first. Those feet are formidable! They are uniquely adapted for catching slippery fish, with large curved talons with barb-like, backward-facing scales. They also have sharp spicules on the underside of their toes. Their outermost toe can pivot forward in the normal "three toes forward, one toe backward" configuration typical of most birds, or pivot backward into a "two toes forward, two toes backward" configuration. Only owls share this ability.

Even the most slippery fish has very little chance of wiggling free of the clutches of the fearsome feet of the "fish hawk." The diving osprey instinctively adjusts its dive angle as it nears its target so that it ends up with a catch instead of just a bath. The osprey frequently ends up entirely underwater as it plunges in after fish, but that is no problem! Its dense, oily plumage is not easily waterlogged, and its nostrils automatically close to prevent drowning.

Ospreys are very effective fishers, something that much less efficient eagles occasionally take advantage of by robbing them of their catch. Ospreys are one of only six land-based bird species to have a worldwide presence, and can be found on every continent except Antarctica.

The osprey I spotted along the river near Santa Rosita, Petén, in Northern Guatemala was merely perched on the top of a dead tree. While I didn't get to see it perform its famous fishing techniques, I did

get a much closer look at the amazing "river hawk" or "sea hawk" than ever before.

In my brief research of this bird, the osprey's sharp talons made me think of the cruel grip sin has on a person's life. Someone caught in an addiction or bad habit might struggle mightily to break free from that suffocating bondage (maybe that's why they call it a "vice"), but without help from someone else they rarely find any degree of freedom. Like an eagle swooping down on an osprey, forcing it to let go of its catch, Jesus Christ has soundly defeated Satan. Jesus alone can set sinners free from the clutches of evil. And quite unlike the eagle/osprey analogy, the one set free will experience life eternal—not merely be consumed by a different captor.

Isaiah prophesied and later Jesus quoted, "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*" (Isaiah 61:1). There is liberty from sin.

Jesus has now entrusted us, His followers, with the task of proclaiming liberty to all who are bound in the cruel grip of sin and vice. On our own, we wouldn't get much done, but we have "*the Spirit of the Lord GOD*" working within us. "*And when he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*" (John 16:8-11).

In our setting, we are surrounded by people living in sin. Thankfully, it is not my responsibility to convict them of their wickedness—that is way beyond my ability. We are to preach righteousness (and live it), pointing people to Jesus, the solution to their sin problem. There really is nothing so fulfilling and exciting in this world than to see someone escape "sin's prison" and join the kingdom of Heaven! Pray for the work in Guatemala, for the harvest is great and the workers are few.

Hermano Pedro Monzón

Pedro Monzón was born into a land-owning family in the village of El Porvenir, Pasaco. Little is known about his childhood and youth other than that he loved to work hard on the land where he was born. As is common among the Guatemalan people, especially in poor, rural settings, Pedro “shacked up” with a girl at an early age. From this union two sons were born, but not all was well with the relationship as sin and vice plagued their home. Pedro eventually left to live with a younger woman named Amanda, and the former relationship dissolved.

During the 1980s, Pedro, along with his siblings, moved to the northern frontier in the Petén. Lured by the availability of land open to homesteaders, most of the family sold their land in El Porvenir to make the move.

Sometime before their move to the Petén, Pedro and Amanda became believers and were baptized into an evangelical church. This led them to look for a church they could join in their new home area near El Chal. Here they first encountered the Mennonites. After attending for some time, they desired to become a part of the Mennonite brotherhood in El Chal. After making some necessary changes, they joined the church.

During this time there was much civil unrest in Guatemala, with guerrillas challenging the Guatemalan government. Much bloodshed resulted on both sides of the conflict, and the common people suffered in the crossfire. The frontier Petén region became a hotbed in the conflict, causing many to flee to more urban areas of Guatemala. Pedro and Amanda decided to abandon their homestead and return to El Porvenir.

On their return, Pedro and Amanda did not feel good about assimilating back into the evangelical church. Pedro asked MAM to send a pastor to start a church. A small place was rented in the town of Pasaco, and a minister traveled down every Sunday to hold services.



Pedro's funeral service

For some time, Pedro and Amanda walked the long steep trail down to town to attend services, but the local community did not show much interest in the fledgling church. This raised the question of whether it was worth sending someone down to lead services every Sunday when leaders were already stretched thin by other responsibilities.

Pedro pleaded that instead of pulling out, more investment was needed to see fruits. “We need our own church house near El Porvenir where the interest is, and we need a pastor living in our midst,” he said. Pedro was heard, and land was purchased. A small wood-slab church house was built, and a pastor moved into the area to shepherd the small flock. The church grew as others from the community turned to Christ, and notable changes came to the small village as lives were changed through the redeeming blood of Jesus.

Missionaries and native pastors have come and gone over the years. Some members fell away, new members joined, some members passed on to their eternal reward, and some are still faithful today. Pedro and his wife Amanda have remained faithful over the years.

Just days before Hermano Pedro passed away on May 9, 2024, I had the privilege of talking with him about his peace with God and his fellowman. He could barely talk anymore, and the deafness that plagued him for years made it difficult to communicate, yet his answer was, “Estoy bien con mi Dios” (I’m right with my God).

May each of us have such a testimony at the end of our race! No, not all was beautiful in Pedro’s life. Seeds sown early in his life left a trail of suffering and heartbreak, and the reaping in family relationships was painful. But the testimony of a changed man who remained faithful till the end shines bright to the generation following.



The long hot walk to the graveyard

Joshua Martin

Staff News

Prayer and Praise Items

- Pray for the Timoteo Cristal family, especially Mary (Cristal) Kauffman, as they grieve the recent death of Mary's husband Jason Kauffman.
 - Pray for Victor Ovalle's health.
 - Praise God for entering our human experience of suffering in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - Praise God for continuing opportunities to proclaim the Gospel openly in Guatemala.
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Current Needs

Personnel: We thank the Lord for the people He has provided for the work and are requesting His direction for the following needs:

- One church-planting couple or family
- A young man who enjoys light mechanic work and maintenance

To volunteer or suggest someone, please get in touch with David Martin or Brian Yoder.

Finances: Through the generosity of His people, God has abundantly supplied needs thus far. We currently face a midsummer funding shortfall and invite you to partner with us in prayer and sharing for this need.

On Friday, May 31st, **Daniel Meyer and Twila Miller** were married in Nebraska. Mr. and Mrs. Meyer will continue their service with MAM in the Oratorio area, where they both served as singles.



Daniel and Twila were married on May 31.

Dean and Jodi Boll and their children left Guatemala at the end of May, returning to Pennsylvania after six years of service in Santa Rosita.

Kimberly Burkholder returned to Pennsylvania in June, after serving as schoolteacher for the Boll family for two years in Santa Rosita.

Josiah Mast completed his term of service at Headquarters in May, and has moved back to California.

Thank you to each of you for your service in Guatemala and God bless you and lead you as you continue to serve in the kingdom of Heaven!

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