



## Messengers of Mercy Chorus 2025 Tour Report



Messengers of Mercy Chorus.

Three years have passed since our first singing tour in Guatemala. We have enjoyed many good experiences since then, but this year the script was different. God wanted to teach us something important, which I will develop in this chronology.

We began rehearsals in mid-May, meeting once a week to study music and practice new songs. To better balance the men's voices, we invited three young men from other places: Lamar and Jevon Stutzman from El Naranjo, Petén—who enthusiastically joined us despite the twenty hours round trip—and Anson Crider from Guatemala City, who joined the bass section. Our director, Nicholas Suárez, spent many days recording and editing hymns with the help of his wife. During the last week before departure, the whole group met almost every day to fine-tune details.

### 1st Program – Sunday, November 30

Monte Sion church, **Mixcolajá**. We had a special service and lunch with friends and another invited church.

In the afternoon of the same day, we traveled an hour to Monte de Los Olivos church in **San Bartolomé Jocotenango** to share the program.

### 2nd Program – Monday, December 1

**El Zácatón**, Cobán. The presentation was held in a Pentecostal evangelical church that Brother Brian Yoder and his church brethren rented for the program, and we had a very blessed time together.

### 3rd Program – Tuesday, December 2

**El Zapote**, San Luis, Petén. We traveled seven hours to reach the home of Ivan Yoder. A few hours later, we gave the program in a community church. It was something different for many in the community who had never seen a group singing a cappella.

### 4th Program – Wednesday, December 3

**El Aguacate**, El Naranjo, Petén. We arrived at the home of Nathan Stutzman and in the evening presented in a community church where a very good number of people attended.

### Thursday, December 4

On this day we had plans to give a presentation at the church in **El Chal**, Petén. But something sad and difficult happened shortly before we reached our destination.

Everything seemed calm on the highway, when suddenly we heard tires screeching across the pavement and felt a sharp turn as our driver tried to avoid hitting a motorcycle carrying a young woman and two children. Then we felt a harsh impact to the front right side of our minibus, and saw the motorcycle's occupants falling to the pavement. Meanwhile, the minibus continued skidding sideways for several more meters. We could only hold on, expecting things to get even worse; if the tires caught suddenly, the vehicle could easily roll over. It finally stopped after sliding into a small ditch on the opposite side of the road. Terrified, we jumped out, hardly believing what was happening. After realizing we were unharmed, we ran to help the two children lying on the asphalt, as vehicles travel at high speeds in that area.

People who heard the loud braking noise came from various places, and several vehicles stopped. Everything became chaotic. People were terrified, uncertain how to act—some tried to calm the children, another group prayed aloud. Another person and I tried to stabilize the young woman, who seemed to be in a very delicate condition. (It is common in various parts of Guatemala for people to avoid touching an injured person out of fear of being blamed if the person were to die; this often leads to a lack of compassion.) After placing her in a better position, several women approached to try to help her regain consciousness. They encouraged her to reconcile with God or give her life to Him. For a moment she seemed aware, and I trust in God's mercy that she may have had the opportunity.

Some people, desperate because emergency services were taking too long, wanted to transport the injured in a private vehicle, while others opposed it out of fear of the law. The ambulance took far too long—thirty minutes or more—despite the accident being just fifteen minutes from the nearest municipality. The injured were finally transported to the nearest medical center. As a group, we gathered to pray and calm ourselves. We couldn't understand how our mission of bringing a message of encouragement and God's mercy could suddenly be overshadowed by such a tragedy.

At that moment, one of the hymns in our program, "We'll Understand," took on deep meaning, and with trembling voices and heavy hearts, uncertain of what would happen, we sang a verse:

*"When tempted, I've longed to see the reason for trials here;  
Others seem to be without cares while evil presses me near.  
We'll understand our sorrows, we'll understand our pain;  
My brother, never fainting, all will be clear in Heaven."*

My heart broke seeing someone suffering such shocking trauma. It was a sadness that words cannot fully describe.

The church brethren from El Chal kindly offered to postpone the program until the following day. But it seemed clear to us that despite the shock, God's plan was that we continue the programs in the following days. The men stayed at the accident site with friends from El Chal to wait for the legal process. The girls were taken to a clinic to be evaluated; most had high blood pressure but felt better after medical attention.

A few hours later, while waiting for the legal procedures, we received the tragic news that the young woman driving the motorcycle had passed away. The situation immediately grew more delicate. The police were on edge, as the area is known for criminal activity; they seemed nervous and wanted to leave, since some men—rumored to be armed—were observing from a distance. We moved the vehicle to the police station, then traveled in another vehicle to the Árbol de Vida school, where the brethren awaited us with dinner. I was not the only one who struggled to sleep that night. Worry, sadness, and wondering how things would unfold kept many of us awake late into the night.

### 5th Program – Friday, December 5

Finally, the night ended. We gathered at Douglas Vásquez's home for lunch. At 7:00 p.m. we presented at the local church. The messages of the hymns encouraged us and stirred many emotions. Midway through each program, we dramatized the story of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan was played as an elderly man who helped his neighbor with a humorous touch that made the children laugh—walking hunched over, forgetting what he had to do, and trying to calm his inexperienced horse—while leaving the message of serving others by helping a young man who had been beaten and robbed.

A few laughs helped us relax a bit more, and the rest of the program continued with more motivation. It ended with a snack and a meaningful time sharing with friends.

### 6th Program - Saturday, December 6

Very early we began our approximately ten-hour trip to Guatemala City. We could only use one of our two minibuses because the one involved in the accident had to remain impounded. Douglas Vásquez from El Chal was willing to make the long round trip to take us in another vehicle and then borrow another mission minibus so we could continue the tour.

That afternoon we traveled to **Joya Grande**, a village near Chimaltenango. The service there started an hour late due to delays on the road and a power outage. The brethren managed to run a generator, but it made a lot of noise and would affect the choir's sound. In the end, various choir members turned on their phone flashlights, placed them on the front bench to light the group, and sang without the sound system. It created a unique atmosphere of lights and music—a special night.

### 7th and 8th Programs – Sunday, December 7

For the morning service we were with the brethren of **Lirio de los Valles** church. After a relaxed and blessed program, we had a very good lunch and conversations with friends.

Later that same day, we visited the brethren at **Emanuel** church. After a warm welcome from Brother Víctor Ovalle, we presented the program and had a good time sharing with friends while they served a snack. We went to our lodgings to prepare for the next day.

### 9th Program – December 8

One group of young people left very early for Jutiapa in hopes of seeing the sunrise by the ocean, while the other group left nearly nine hours later. We gathered at Joshua Martin's home. Later we presented the program to the brethren of **Pasaco**, a very hot but welcoming place. We finished by traveling four hours to our lodgings.

### 10th Program – Tuesday, December 9

We traveled to **Nahuala** to offer our final program. For this occasion, Andrew Crider joined the group and helped sing bass. It was our first visit to this place with the chorus. Gathering for services has been difficult for these brethren, as the church is located in a violently disputed area. There have been land conflicts with another town for many years. There are often shootings, murders, kidnappings, and more. The brethren showed us bullet holes in the church roof—at least thirty-five. Most buildings have patches on their metal roofs to prevent rain from entering through the many holes caused by gunfire.

They told us it had been about two years since the last conflict. Although the atmosphere was tense, there seemed to be peace. They listened to the hymns with emotion and expressed their gratitude for the visit. Unbeknown to us, this would be their last service in the church building in 2025. Possibly while we met and shared, somewhere in the surrounding mountains and ravines, violent groups were preparing to kidnap civilians and invade a military camp installed for security. Shortly after we returned home, the brethren from the area reported a new outbreak of violence, with thirteen people allegedly killed—including neighbors of some of the church members who had to seek refuge to avoid falling into the hands of organized crime. This means they will not be able to meet again for Sunday services until it is safe, which may take a long time.

A year and a half ago, we lost a member of our group, Belisario Natareno. God decided to call him into His presence. It was not easy returning to different churches afterward, remembering the times he accompanied us. Singing hymns in his memory reminded us that there are purposes for living.

The incidents and physical danger of our last trip make us think deeply about what drives us to keep doing what we love. Yet when we remember the radiant eyes of children hearing the songs, who will hopefully one day give their talents to God, and remember the brethren living in difficult situations who need our encouraging reminder that we also suffer but continue onward, and remember those who shyly stand on tiptoe at church windows or stretch their necks from the doorway to see this strange group singing without instruments...and remember the encouragement we ourselves received from every place we visited... That and much more makes it worthwhile.

*Arbin Mux Natareno*

## Recent events:

General Institute, a Bible study week held in Sumpango, took place on November 11 – 13, 2025.



We're grateful for a new building that replaces the old tent!

The yearly Bible Conference in San Bartolomé was held on December 9 – 11, 2025.



An evening service in San Bartolomé.



Food and fellowship is an important part of Bible study week.



# Staff News

Congratulations to: **Dustin and Priscila (Muñoz) Hartzler!** Their wedding was held on January 6, 2026, and they will continue living in Oratorio.



Dustin and Priscila (Muñoz) Hartzler

## Prayer and Praise Items

- ◆ Pray for the church in Nahualá and for peace in their community.
- ◆ Pray for the family affected by the accident near El Chal and for the legal resolution to proceed in a timely manner.
- ◆ Pray for the MAM schools starting a new year of studies.
- ◆ Praise God for His promise to never leave nor forsake His own!

## 2025 Financial Report

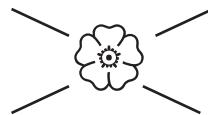
*Through another year of progress and setbacks, blessings and tragedy, God has again been faithful to provide what we needed when we needed it. We thank Him for His unending grace and kindness, and we thank you for your partnership and generosity. May the prayers, love, and service of His people ever move His work forward.*

### January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025

Beginning Balance	\$55,765.16
Income	\$841,025.83
Transfer From Savings	\$0.00
Actual Operating Income	<u>\$896,790.99</u>
Total Income	\$896,790.99
Disbursements	
Literature	\$0.00
Newsletter	\$10,750.00
Travel	\$18,047.43
Retirement and Medical	\$0.00
Worker Allowance	\$0.00
Bank & Miscellaneous Charges	\$64.50
Transfer to Field	\$797,708.28
Supplies	\$111.19
U.S. Checks for Guatemala Funds	<u>\$2,023.00</u>
Actual Operating Disbursements	\$828,704.40
Ending Checkbook Balance	\$68,086.59

Anabaptist Financial Savings Account Financial Statement	
Beginning Savings Balance	\$63,021.01
Interest Income	\$3,445.81
Transfer to Savings Account	\$0.00
Total Income	<u>\$66,466.82</u>

Disbursements	
Transfer From Savings Account	<u>\$0.00</u>
Total Disbursements	\$0.00
Savings Account Balance	\$66,466.82



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