

APRIL, 2009

GUATEMALA NEWSLETTER

We arrived on February 18 and a lot of great things for the Lord have been happening.

The attendance of the congregation has risen steadily from an average of around 40 each Sunday to about 50. This is out of a total membership of about 78. This has occurred in about 6 months time. The services start with about 20 people and over the course of about 30 minutes 30 or so more arrive. No one has a car and very few are in walking distance so buses are the main means of transportation. Some have to take 2 different buses to get to church and for some it is an economical sacrifice. For some it can take hour by bus. The service begins with about 45 minutes of singing and praying, much of it done standing. We then have communion, then the young people go to classes and the adults stay for preaching/teaching. Some of the adult session is interactive where the preacher asks questions. Last year Carl taught the teens but Luis now doing this. Carl did teach one Sunday and will possibly do it some more. For now Carl prefers to be in the adult class. The collection is still very low only about \$35 a week. This is not enough to pay their rent. Most people earn very little. Juan Carlos is making an effort to teach them about giving but it is very hard. Many come from other faiths where it was demanded that they give and they have rebelled against this.

With Juan Carlos (the preacher) we have made two home visits. We targeted the two homes where we also have the chicken projects. One is going very well and the chickens looked very good and everything seemed to be going well. In the other we were a little disappointed in that the coop was not clean, not adequate water and the area for the chickens had been cut in half to make room for two turkeys. The chickens, about 15, seemed very stressed and also not getting enough food. We have asked them to go back to the original plans before we help any more. These projects are designed primarily to help them earn more money and hopefully give more to the church although we have not requested them to give more. We hope to help a family to start a project with rabbits. Things do not move very fast here. There is a different tempo to life and work.

We are slowly moving toward having a Bible correspondence program. Thanks to the mission committee at the Tusculum Church of Christ in Nashville, TN (where we attend back in the states) we have the first of 3 lessons. It would be very difficult to do it by mail here so we will do it person to person. Tusculum has given us some guidance and we will need more. We hope to get this started in about 3 weeks (after *Semana Santa*).

Another resource we will began using is a video of the book of Matthew in Spanish and English. It is nearly 3 hours long and can be used in 5 or 10 minute

segments to teach. It is well produced and acted. We got this from our work with Leoncio and Amy Dominquez at the Madison Church of Christ in Madison, Tn. Leoncio and Amy are leading the Spanish speaking congregation in Madison and are doing a great work.

We purchased the Jule Miller series on DVD before we left the states and we hope to begin a series showing them in San Lorenzo. Please pray for this effort as well as the other projects we are setting out to do.

We have also restarted our Sunday evening devotionals for English speaking people in Antigua. We will again use the church building in Antigua. Our advertising begins this week. We should attract tourists. Also there are many Christians who come here to go to language school and for different mission projects who may attend.

The summer campaign is taking shape and we are planning and working toward making it one of the best yet. It will be our 8th. If you would like to join email us. It will be from July 3 to July 13.

We are looking for a church to take up the work here. Please help us spread the good news about the work here.

The following is about Antigua and some of its culture. It is so beautiful here and the climate is so fantastic. This past week, this week and next week are probably the most important times for the people here in Antigua. It is all for the preparation and celebration of "*Semana Santa*" or holy week. It is the build up and celebration of Easter. Last year there were an estimated 150,000 people outside of Antigua who came for these celebrations. They come from all over the world. During these weeks there are many parades. The most prominent features for us are the *alfombras* which the people make on the streets. Today the street in front of our house is lined with about 15 gorgeous *alfombras*. They are "carpets" made of colored sawdust, sand, flowers & sometimes fruits & vegetables. The procession walks over these which people have spent hours constructing with great pride. It is all very beautiful & interesting.

We want to thank everyone for their support and help. The Church in Crossroads (Enola, AR) is the latest to make a contribution. We thank them for their support and prayers.

God bless

Carl and Claire