
the *Divine Adventure*

the official newsletter of the Allen family

Christmas 2007 Edition

Volume 8

The missionaries go to church...

One would rather expect that missionaries go to church, but plugging into a church is not as simple as you might think. Although Jen doesn't want me to tell you all this, she fell asleep in more than one service during our first few months in Costa Rica. In all fairness, the air is warm, understanding took lots of work, and well Latin worship services go on for about 3 hours. Finally, after moving to a new part of town and having improved in our linguistic abilities, God has lead us to a new community of believers with whom we can grow, fellowship, and minister. This has been something we have prayer for often, and we see this as an answer to prayer.

The church is called Comunidad Cristiana el Faro (Lighthouse Christian Community) and is located in a former coffee field, nestled back in a poor neighborhood (ironically, in a town called San Diego de Tres Ríos) that is home to many Nicaraguan immigrants and families who struggle economically. The church is a living testament to God's faithfulness as He has provided them with funds to own this property and the entire church has been built out of recycled wood from donated shipping containers.

The church has placed a huge emphasis on evangelism and preaching God's Word to those who have not heard it before. The church runs a child care center where single moms can safely leave their kids while at work during the week, and the children learn about who Jesus is and what He has done for them. The church also teaches classes to adults in the evenings to help them learn skills like computer use, accounting, marketing, and handicrafts. These classes often bring in people from the community who otherwise wouldn't consider stepping foot inside a church. There are several in the church who first come to benefit from the class, and have since come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

Lessons from the School of Hard Knocks

Since you have been a part of our adventure from the beginning, you know that we are first-term missionaries, with no previous full-time ministry experience. We have learned this past year that the 'flunk-out rate' for first-term missionaries is alarmingly high. We have seen this first hand as we have observed missionary friends struggling with depression, serious health problems, issues with their kids, and even some who have had to return home to address marital issues. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have an enemy committed to making sure we meet resistance and attacks at every corner.

As I try to stand guard against this spiritual enemy, I am aware that the most effective tools this enemy has are my own pride and self-sufficiency. Ministry, and the Christian life in general, are intended by God to be done only in the strength of Jesus, and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. As soon as self-reliance creeps in, we cease to be totally reliant on our God, and we thereby assume the role intended to be played by God alone. As I continue my study of the book of Jeremiah, this passage about self-reliance stopped me dead in my tracks.

Reflect on this. Jeremiah 17:5-8:

This is what the LORD says:

"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes.

He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives."

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

These verses set me straight in that I often think my own abilities and ideas will suffice in managing my family, relationships, and ministry. There is danger in this, but also there is a promise of blessing if we can learn to trust in our trustworthy God.

MINISTRY UPDATE

As ProMETA's Director of Operations, I have been very occupied with 3 primary projects over the past several months. Let me tell you briefly about each of these projects...

LEGAL INCORPORATION

We just completed a year-long process to form a non-profit organization (Asociación Educativa ProMETA), recognized by the Costa Rican government. This is one of many initial steps to become an accredited post-graduate university program. Through this experience, I worked with lawyers and learned the intricacies of the legal process here.

WEB DEVELOPMENT

Using open source software, we just finished development work on a new Web site. In addition to a new Web site, we have focused on reaching new students through strategic Web marketing (using Google and a Spanish language Web site for pastors). Our Web site visits are up over 150%, and we have received more applications for admissions to the Master's degree programs than ever before.

NEW SEMESTER LAUNCH

Much work has done into preparing courses for the upcoming semester. This includes loading multi-media files into the virtual classroom software, shipping CD-ROMs to other countries, and registering students. So far, we have pastors taking classes from Venezuela, Spain, Costa Rica, Peru, and Mexico.

January classes include:

- Church Planting
- Education for Christian Leaders
- Theology of Leadership
- Hermeneutics (Biblical Interpretation)

WHAT IS PROMETA?

ProMETA stands for Programas de Maestría en Estudios Teológicos Accesibles (in English, Accessible Masters Program in Theological Studies). We exist to equip Spanish-speaking pastors to better lead the Latin American Church in preaching and teaching the Gospel. Go on-line and take a closer look at how we use technology to accomplish this goal:

<http://www.pro-meta.org>

<http://www.latn.org>

Prayer Corner

- Pray for the pastors who will be starting classes with ProMETA in January that God would prepare them to learn and grow in knowledge of Christ and His Word.
- Please pray for Matthew as he begins to teach basic doctrine to a 11-15 years Sunday school class, starting in January. Pray for receptive hearts and discernment as many of the kids have not yet accepted Christ as their Savior.
- Personal financial support, as our insurance costs just went up significantly, resulting in us being about 20% under-supported each month.

Thank you! Merry Christmas to you and your family.

We thank you for praying for us and for sharing with us financially throughout this past year.

What's new with you? Please keep in touch. It's a huge encouragement to us, and we love to hear how we can pray for you.

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Financial gifts to support our family and our ministry can be sent to:



All gifts are tax deductible and the Latin America Mission will provide receipts for IRS purposes.