

KAIROSMINISTRIES

Special points of interest:

- God's grace and mercy showered upon us all
- Looking ahead to Christmas with Kairos Ministries
- Recap of our summer work teams

Volume 8 Issue 2

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Making Known the Presence of God

by Francisco "Paco" Valdez



Boys gathering more than they bargained for in the river.

In the recent celebration of Children's Day in Guatemala, we witnessed various experiences. Some children celebrated in their schools, others in their homes and/or in the churches, and those who could afford to may have visited a fast food restaurant. One specific group of boys caught my attention on this day. While many were celebrating in different ways, these young men were part of a rescue. It was my day to be on call with the firefighters and we were called to extract a human body part, out of a river filled with sewage. The boys were the ones who made the discovery. I asked a woman who was from that area, "What were these boys doing here?" Her response: "It is because we sent them to collect firewood so we can cook". While some where celebrating, these children only had the opportunity to see the death and violence towards other human beings. This, without a doubt, also happens in other parts of the world. I am not trying to minimize or add grander to these horrific events, rather, the point I am trying to make is that we as Christians should put the focus on the responsibility we have to make known the presence of God in the middle of these realities. God wants all of us to have a full life. This doesn't mean to have a life with a lot of comforts or money, whether we have it or not, but that we would have a life that generates hope and solidarity. That we give, but not to feel better than those who are receiving our gifts, but because they are our brothers. Even more so with children. For this reason, I plead for your prayers, for the children who suffer from violence, and so the Holy Spirit will guide all of us to help us each discern between the good and that which appears to be good. (That's why we should say "no" to toys that symbolize violence).

Blessings to each of you and may the peace of God be with you always.

Paco

Rain, Rain Go Away

Many of you read in our recent prayer request, about the heavy rains that lasted for almost three weeks straight in Guatemala (and Central America as a whole). While the rains have since stopped, the damaging effects still remain evident through closed roads, continued mud-slides, wash-outs, demolished buildings and thousands of acres of lost crops all across the country.

CONRED (similar to FEMA in the USA) has had to open several shelters for people who have lost their homes or who were forced out of their neighborhoods due to potentially life-threatening conditions. Right now, the focus is on rebuilding all that has been destroyed, which could take an indefinite amount of time due to the extensive damages.

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Christmas With Kairos

It is hard to believe, but it is "beginning to look a lot like Christmas . . ." at least when it comes to planning for the traditional end of the year festivities. For the past several years, Kairos Ministries has delighted in being able to bring some Christmas festivities to the families living in the village of Tierra Blanca, while also making Christmas and New Years a little special for those families staying in the Kairos House over the holidays. The total cost for these three celebrations is **$2,462.64**(see budget break down on the right). If you are interested in helping offset some of the financial costs for these special activities, please contact us at kairosministriesguatemala@yahoo.com and put CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS in the subject line of your email. Whether you live in Guatemala or in the USA, we will direct you on how you can make your financial or physical contribution. *All contributions made in the USA are tax deductible.*

Celebrations in Camotan

*3 Piñatas	Q300	$39
*100 Presents @ Q30 each	Q3,000	$389.61
*15 Christmas Baskets @ 150 each	Q2,250	$292.21
*3 big bags of candy for piñata	Q312	$40.52
*Lunch for approx 150 people	Q2,700	$350.65
*Drinks	Q 150	$19.48
*Plates/utensils	Q150	$19.48
*2 rental trucks	Q1,200	$155.84
*Gasoline	Q1,000	$129.87
TOTAL:	**Q11,062**	**$1,436.66**

Christmas Dinner at Kairos House

*Dinner for approx 50	Q3,000	$389.61
*30 gifts @ Q50 each	Q1,500	$194.81
*1 special basket for caretaker	Q300	$38.96
*Christmas Bonus for caretaker	Q1,600	$207.79
TOTAL:	**Q6,400**	**$831.17**

New Years Dinner at Kairos House

*Dinner for 25 people	Q1,500	$194.81



Left –waiting for gifts in Camotán
Below-Kairos families outside of the National Airport



Celebrating Children's Day – September 2011

Again, Kairos wanted to do something special for the children staying in Kairos House, and Children's Day seemed like the perfect opportunity to show them just how special they are. Several families were treated to lunch at Wendy's (a very special experience) and then spent the rest of the afternoon driving around the city admiring the sites (a first for many of them). They had the added thrill of being able to stop at the airport and watch several planes take off and land, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Guatemalan Presidential Election 2011

"We pray that God will give wisdom to whichever candidate is elected and that the president elect's heart will be softened to listen to God's direction. "

Those of you outside of Guatemala may not have been keeping up with the current presidential elections, nor be familiar with the election process. In September of this year, more than 10 candidates vied for the presidential position (elections are every four years). According to Guatemalan law, you must have 50% + 1 of the votes in order to win. If no winner is selected during this first process (which was the case in September), there is a second election that is held again in November between the top two candidates. In the upcoming weeks, Otto Perez and Manuel Baldizon will go head to head trying to win the votes of the majority of Guatemalans. Mr. Perez (Partido Patriota – Patriot Party) is of a strong military background, and Mr. Baldizon (Partido Lider – Leader Party) is of a business background. Both parties are considered to be "right –wing" (which has a different connotation in Guatemala than it does in the USA). We pray that God will give wisdom to whichever candidate is elected and that the president elect's heart will be softened to listen to God's direction.

Grace – is it really enough? - by Elizabeth Valdez

We offer praises when our prayers are answered affirmatively, but what if God says, "no"? Do we still offer up our praises?

"My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9a). Many of us have read this piece of Scripture several times over in our lifetimes, but if we were to stop and be honest with ourselves, do we believe this to be true in our own lives? Do we accept this gift of grace, in both the "good and bad times"?

A few months ago, I was reading in my Bible (The Devotional Bible, New Century Version) a devotional by Max Lucado which was taken from his book, ---*In the Grip of Grace © 1993.* In this devotional, he shared of a time when his two year old daughter almost drowned in a swimming pool but was saved by a neighbor. The next morning, during his journal time, he was praising God for his mercy and grace in saving his daughter's life, when he heard God question him, "*Would I be less wonderful had I let her drown? Would I be any less a good God for calling her home? Would I still be receiving your praise this morning had I not saved her?"* His focus in this devotional was a challenge to look at our lives from heaven's perspective. In the light of eternity, having been saved from hell, could anyone really complain? He writes, "Having been given eternal life, dare we grumble at an aching body? Having been given heavenly riches, dare we bemoan earthly poverty?"

So often, we pray for things like healing from an illness, recovery from an economic downfall, safety for a loved one, and we praise God with our thanks and wonderment when He answers our prayers in a response favorable to our request. However, are we just as quick to send up our praises when He answers differently? What if He says "no"? What if a loved one doesn't recover from their illness? What if we lose every material item we own? What if harm comes to someone we care about? Where is our praise then?

Several song writers, past and present, have put their pen to paper on this very theme. --- One of my favorites is from the 19th century, "It is Well with My Soul", written by Horatio G. Spafford. For those of you who are not familiar with this man's background, he lost some of his business during the Great Chicago Fire. Two years later he and his wife and their four daughters – planned a trip to Europe for a time of relaxation. At the last minute, he became detained by some business and he sent his daughters and wife ahead of him with plans to meet them in Europe. Before he left on his boat, he received a wire from his wife, informing him that their boat had sunk and all four daughters had drowned. When his wife Anna was rescued, a fellow survivor heard her say, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why." On his voyage across the Atlantic to be with his wife, he penned the words to this timeless hymn:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul. –verse one

This hymn seems to echo the words of David found in Psalm 13. David is crying out to the Lord for relief from his suffering, feeling that God has forgotten about him. However, through his anguish he finished the Psalm in verses 5 and 6,

"*But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.*" (NIV)

Though I admit that I am often guilty of not having *my* first response be that of praise and thanks during times of trouble, I have witnessed such praise and thanksgiving from those families we serve who are suffering the effects of their poverty or a great loss. Despite having next to nothing of material worth, or watching their child suffer with a potentially fatal disease, I will often hear the first words out of a parent's mouth be would words of thanks to God for His faithfulness, mercy and grace. Of course there is still pain or grief associated with their circumstances, and of course the prayers of these parents or individuals are filled with hope for full recovery or "positive change", but there is rarely a shortage of praise and thanksgiving – despite the outcome of the situation.

God has given us all a gift. Through His grace, (Ephesians 2:4-10) He saves those who choose to accept His gift from the punishment that our sin deserves by offering an exchange of His Son's perfect life so that we may have eternal life. The friends we have met as we have served through Kairos Ministries have taught us that the verse we referenced from 2 Corinthians at the beginning of this text *is true*. God's grace *is sufficient*. Despite what the world's standards of "good" or "okay" tell us, if all God ever gave us was His beautiful grace, wouldn't that be enough?

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control,
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul. –verse two
"It is Well with My Soul"

Looking Back Before Moving Ahead

2011 kept us busy with groups as we hosted 5 teams this year. In our Spring newsletter we shared with everyone how the two teams that came in January served alongside Kairos Ministries. In this edition, we will focus on the three teams that joined us in Guatemala during June and July.

June 2011 – 1st Presbyterian Church of Lewisburg, PA: Medical Team

We were thrilled to have our first team of the summer be a group of familiar faces who have been working with Kairos Ministries for seven years, with this being their 7th "summer" trip (they also travel with us during the month of January). The clinics ran with 3 doctors, 2 dentists, and several crucial supporters operating triage, pharmacy and passing out fruit trees to each family. The team treated several hundred people and passed out 100 trees and repaired or replaced several dozen water filters between the two villages where they offered treatment (Tierra Blanca and Chiguaton). This year, the group added another dimension to the medical clinic with college student Drew Griffeth creating a colorful mural on the side of the school located in Tierra Blanca This has truly added an element of beauty to the school grounds. Drew demonstrated true grace and humbleness in allowing other members of the group, along with students from the school, to help in the painting process – he even allowed the Valdez' 6-year old daughter to add in her own fish which were not part of the original design. Drew will be returning in January to finish his masterpiece, along with another medical and health team who continue to improve the overall well-being of the families in the villages.



Lewisburg Presbyterian Medical Team 2011



Unfinished mural on side of school in Tierra Blanca

July 2011 –Ruhl's United Methodist Church: Painting Crew

This was RUMC's 9th trip with Kairos Ministries, but only their 2nd "summer trip" comprised mainly of young adults. The group of eight spent four days in the village of Chiguaton, adding new life to their school with a new paint job. Despite some torrential downpours, the group was able to finish both the interior and exterior of the building. It was amazing to watch God use a small group to accomplish such a big task while also allowing for time to interact with some of the school children and teachers who also offered their hands at beautifying the building.

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RUMC Painting Team



Before— preparing the surface for painting



After—the group poses in front of the freshly painted school

July 2011 – LCBC of Manheim, PA: Medical Team

LCBC traveled again to Guatemala for their 3rd medical mission, though this was their 5th trip in their partnership with Kairos Ministries. Their first trip was in the fall of 2006, was a construction and VBS (Vacation Bible School) team of five individuals. In July of 2008, they returned for another construction trip, growing the team to eight. The medical teams have tripled their group numbers, with this last team having 24 members! The group was made up of two doctors, one dentist, one pharmacist, many nurses, and several other key individuals – five of them being members of the church's senior high youth program. The team attended to over 600 individuals while strengthening relationships and building trust with the members of the local communities. We are so grateful that they have already committed to a week of service in July of 2012.

Kairos Ministries could not progress in its goals of serving the "poorest of the poor" without the support of some of our local friends and churches.

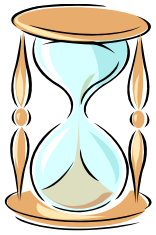


Group shot of LCBC Medical Team 2011 with some of Kairos Ministries Family



In addition to the efforts and talents of our groups from the USA, Kairos Ministries could not progress in its goals of serving the "poorest of the poor" without the support of some of our local friends and churches. Several members of the church in Chiquimula, El Calvario, offer their free-time with assisting Priscila in the preparation of the meals, opening their home for the groups to eat in, and accompanying the groups to the villages to aid in the work efforts. To each of these individuals, we offer our deepest gratitude.

Leaders of the four communities we served in 2011 with their youngest son



PRAYER REQUESTS

As always, Kairos Ministries could not function without the many prayers lifted up on its behalf, nor could our family have the energy to continue to do the work we have been called to do without your prayers and support. Please join us in praying for the requests we have listed here below.

* Financial needs in the Kairos House
* Missionary Support (Paco & Priscila Valdez; Gustavo & Elizabeth Valdez; Francisco & Ingrid Valdez)
* Families staying in the Kairos House
* The search for/funds to purchase a property for Kairos House
* All the families affected by the recent rains

Kairos Ministries

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"...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Matthew 25:40



VISTAZO A LA VIDA DE LOS VALDEZES

Paco & Priscila continue leading their family and those who volunteer with the efforts and vision of Kairos Ministries. Paco continues to use his "free-time" outside of Kairos and his church by "relaxing" in his role of Chief with the Volunteer Fire Fighters. Priscila enjoys her little "free-time" by spending it with ladies in their church in various activities. They both enjoy doting on their four grandchildren who live in Guatemala and are thrilled when all six can be together when their two grandchildren from the USA are there for two and a half months in the summer.

Gustavo & Elizabeth continue to keep one foot in each country, spending the US school year in the USA and traveling together as a family to Guatemala during the summer months. Next summer, their travels will have some added excitement as they will all be traveling with the newest member of their family, due to arrive in early April 2012. Annalucia, their 6 year old, is excelling in the 1st grade while Gabriella, their 2 year old, has started nursery school this year, two mornings a week. They are both thrilled to be welcoming another sibling, with Annalucia reminding Gabriella that even though she too will be a "big sister" soon, Annalucia will remain the "biggest sister"!

Franciso "Paqui" & Ingrid are becoming increasingly more involved with Kairos House, while Francisco is also pursuing his undergraduate degree in psychology from a local college. Ingrid continues to be very involved with the women's group in their church, offering leadership to a weekly Bible Study. Sarah, their 8 year old, is growing into a beautiful young lady and maintains her love and passion for animals – making sure to rescue even the smallest of insects. Felipe, their 4 year old, just finished his first year of school and continues to bring a lot of joy and entertainment to the family.

Any & Luis "Chino" are doing great and have survived the first year of parents to two, with their youngest, Jose Emilio, reaching his 1-year milestone this past August. Jose Emilio is a vibrant and healthy little boy, keeping his parents busy as he has added walking to his repertoire of skills. Regina, their 6 year old, just completed another year of school with all high marks on her report card. Both she and her brother enjoy taking swimming classes at a nearby center. Any has recently been offered a job teaching 6 year olds at a nearby school where both Regina and Jose Emilio will be able to attend while she works. She will start in January with the new school year. Chino is working hard in his career as an architect.

We also want to know how you are doing and how we can too pray for you. If you have the time to drop us a line, we'd love to hear from you and receive an update of your lives. We all thank you for the love you have shown us and your continued prayers.

In Christ's Love –

The Valdez Family