

EMU

INTERNATIONAL

Evangelical Mission to the Unreached

Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Assistant Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

There was a time when May was one of my two favorite months: it's not too hot or too cold, flowers festoon the yard, trees are still newly verdant, school gets out for the summer, and Mother's Day is sometime in May (I can never remember which Sunday!). But I'm getting rather skittish about May.

May 23, 2017, was the last day of work for the young lady who was EMU's financial secretary/administrator for five years. For the next two months **Joan** scrambled to keep the office going by herself - with **Jeff's** occasional help. At the beginning of May 2018, the current part-time financial secretary let Jeff, Joan, and me know that she is looking for another job with her last day being May 29. And as of today, we have no applicants for the job.

Last year, I was the director of EMU and had Jeff work with Joan in order to learn the office procedures - a good training time. This year, Jeff is the director - and I'm rather nervous about acquiring a new job description!

Please pray with us as we seek to find a replacement to **assist Joan with the mission finances**. And pray that Joan will hold up well as she has more "on her plate" once again.

"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." **Teaching God's Word** permeates almost everything we do

(continued on page 2)

MAKING DISCIPLES IN THE LAND OF THE MAYA

by Jeff Davis, director of EMU International

"Amazing!" That was an expression that Marco Nuñez and I used as we spent the last thirteen days together - April 18-May 1. We were describing the beauty and diversity of Mexico. We were describing how God has worked in Marco's life, particularly in leading him to leave his ministry in Christian education as a teacher and school administrator, and return from the USA to his birth country of Mexico as a missionary twenty-one years ago. Most of all we were referring to God's provision for the needed resources to carry out the mission and His work in the lives of individuals, a work that only God could do.

Before I left for Mexico, I heard many people say, "A mission trip to Cancún? I want to go on that trip." I must confess that I thought the same thing when I heard about Marco and his wife, Gwendolyn's, ministry. I had visions of white sand beaches and crystal clear blue water. In my thirteen days in Mexico, I didn't see the beaches and water of the Caribbean until day twelve. That was just fine with me because I saw something much better.

God is doing a truly "amazing" work across the Yucatán Peninsula and the nearby states through Marco and the many disciples that he has trained in what has been called "The Land of the Maya." Marco estimates that in his 21 years in Mexico he has seen around 500 people saved, and he has baptized around 300. What is exciting to me is that many of these are not just converts, but true disciples.

The essence of following Jesus is the natural result that He will make us fishers of men. A disciple is not one who just comes to church, is baptized, and listens to the preaching. A disciple enters into life with other people and is one who makes other disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). I'm talking about building relationships for redemptive purposes. Marco and his church, the First Fundamental Baptist Church of Cancún (FFBCC), have made a deliberate effort to build relationships.



Marco and Jeff in Cancún, Mexico
Gwendolyn did not accompany the men on their long trip to Santa Martha, Chiapas

It is not easy in a society with a history that goes back so well before the time of Christ. There was a book in my bedroom at the Nuñezes' house titled, "The Mayas, 3000 Years of Civilization." The Maya settled in an area of nearly 250,000 square miles that includes the present-day states of Yucatán, Campeche, Quintana Roo, eastern Tabasco, and Chiapas, all states that Marco and I visited. Mayan religion, with its idols, traditions, and superstitions, is blended with the Catholic teachings brought by the Spanish conquerors to form a type of religious syncretism. The people have deep roots and are committed to their beliefs, although no two people seem to believe exactly alike. Believing that the Gospel is still the power of God for salvation, Marco and his people continue to sow the seed of the Word of God and allow God to give the increase.

When I left for Mexico on Wednesday, April 18, I had two 50-pound suitcases, plus a full carry-on, and my backpack, filled with books and tracts that Marco had requested. Marco picked me up at the airport after their Wednesday night service. As I settled in to rest for the night, I prayed to God asking Him to specifically bless this trip and use us

(continued on page 3)

ALONG THE WAY...*(continued from page 1)*

in EMU. But this month it seems that most of the updates and prayer requests have to do with teaching. The first has to do with a possible new teacher with EMU.

For years, our **current missionary applicant** has let us know of his interest in becoming a missionary with EMU to do the same type of teaching ministry as Ted Allston. He has even traveled with Ted a few times to Mongolia to teach. Currently, he is working as a construction foreman for a company that one of our **EMU board members** is a part of. He has already met with Ted, Jeff, Joan, and me to discuss his desire and plan. A meeting will be held on May 17 for our applicant and his wife to meet with the board members, after which, we plan to vote on whether or not they become missionaries with EMU. Thanks for your prayers.

Ted Allston was in Kenya April 12-28 to visit an orphanage and to teach at the Mulango Bible College. He spent the first week teaching Ecclesiology to all the students at the block course. The second week Ted taught hermeneutics to a special group that spoke very good English. We thank the Lord that he returned home safely.



Ted with his 5 hermeneutics students. Ted's host, Pastor Meshack (far right), & his wife, Winnie, took this block course.

The **Pastors' School in Cambodia** will hold another session **May 13-18**. For several months, **Dr. Jeremy Farmer** has been working on a survey book for Genesis to Judges. (Jeremy taught Old Testament



JD (far left) with the students and other teachers in Myanmar

theology before moving to Cambodia.) The difficulty has been in composing a text that is simple enough for students who by-and-large have little education, but deep enough to ground them well in the teachings of the Pentateuch, Joshua, & Judges. And written in a way that can be properly translated into the Khmer language. Jeremy completed the 144-page book, and **JD Crowley** has had it translated into Khmer as the study material for the May classes. There will be around 70 students from five different language groups. Pray for safety in travel as teachers and students converge on Ban Lung from around northeastern Cambodia. JD was also in Myanmar in April teaching the group he has visited before.



A recent picture of the congregation of Iglesia Bautista Gracia (Tim standing at far left)

Another blessing that Jeremy shared with us is that his Khmer language study seems to have taken hold so that he is able to minister in this tongue more freely. (Those of us who follow the Farmers' ministry know that Jeremy has been discouraged with his lack of progress in Khmer over the past many months.)



The graduating class in Pileru with teachers

Spring is a time when many of the **Good News Bible Colleges in India** hold their graduations. **Billy Judson** is not able to attend all the ceremonies as some are too far afield. Billy and his father, Jaya Sekhar, took a 12-hour train ride to the city of Pileru for the April 18 graduation. There



The Trichy graduation class

were eleven graduates, and nine who were commissioned to enter the ministry. They then took a four-hour train ride to Kuppam for the inauguration of the 51st Good News Bible College to open in India. Later in April, Billy and his father traveled another 12 hours by rail for a graduation in the city of Trichy.

Tim Chapman has started a new teaching ministry from Lima, Perú, via You Tube. The program can be viewed using the name "Iglesia Bautista Gracia," the name of his church. He is teaching through the Book of Romans in Spanish. The program airs at 9:00 p.m. on Mondays, Peru time. (EST minus 1 hour). We trust this will be a teaching platform that is successful.

Tim and Ruth Bixby are continuing two ministries at the Baptist Church of Saint Denis. Tim is teaching a 12-session series on Fundamental Truths to twenty students. Ruth is teaching the last of five sessions from the Book of Colossians to 30-35 ladies this month. Also, Ruth's parents are visiting the Bixbys in May. Concerning the Sarcelles church building, the insurance company wants to get another contractor's quote before work can begin to repair the fire damage inside the sanctuary. A family from the States is scheduled to be in France beginning May 30 to help with the construction and renovation of the sanctuary, but as of today, the insurance company is not allowing anyone to enter the building. Pray that the Sarcelles congregation will have wisdom concerning how to proceed.

The congregation at the Baptist Church of Koprivnica, Croatia, where **Kornel and Tanja Crnković** minister, continues to search for a new place to have services. Their current rented church building has been too small for several years; however, available property for sale at a reasonable price remains scarce. They have been saving money and have some promised gifts when the opportunity to buy arises.

Currently the Steels and Hancocks are "home" on furlough. The **Hancocks** bought a used 35-foot trailer and an SUV to pull it - and to hold their four children in car seats. This is how they traveled while on deputation four years ago. They will be driving as far as California and Minnesota for meetings. They need an additional \$350 per month in support.

(continued on page 4)

Making Disciples

(continued from page 1)

to be an encouragement to the churches that we would visit. Looking back now, I believe God used us to encourage the people, but God also encouraged us.



The Thursday morning Bible class with four of the pastors, and Marco as translator

Shortly after establishing his church, Marco began a Bible school in the church to train other nationals. Six graduates have been commissioned by FFBCC to begin churches in other parts of Mexico. Four of those pastors, who minister within a couple of hours' drive from Cancún, joined us on Thursday for breakfast, a day of testimonies, and Bible training. Gwendolyn fixed two amazing meals for us. It was a blessing to hear the testimonies of these pastors. Each was won to Christ through a deliberate effort on Marco's part to build a redemptive relationship. I shared my testimony and also walked them through Psalms 67 and 131. That evening I joined Marco, Gwendolyn, and several other people from their church in distributing tracts around the blocks surrounding one of the hospitals in Cancún. Most of the people were very grateful to receive a tract. Exceptions included some Jehovah's Witnesses who had set up a booth on a nearby corner, and there was also another man who looked sternly at me and waved his finger as if to say, "no!"

On Friday, Marco and I set out on our 1,700-mile adventure. It took us two days to drive to the small village of Santa Martha, Chiapas. On the way we visited the city of Palenque and its famous Mayan ruins that date back to a civilization that flourished in the 7th Century. The Dramamine that I took worked for most of the several hours that it took to drive over the mountains in Chiapas near the Guatemalan border. We had to literally cross hundreds of topes (speed bumps), which made for slow travel and a queasy stomach.



Odalís, Dolores, & Ciro Alvarado

We arrived at the house/church of Ciro Alvarado on Saturday evening. He was one of the first pastors that Marco trained for the ministry. Ciro was born in this village. He went to Cancún to work construction as an adult. Marco used to take the workers cold water and talk to them during their breaks. Ciro was one who responded to the Gospel message. He eventually felt God's call to preach. He brought his family to Cancún, and they all were saved. Marco led him through a three-year training program, and then Ciro wanted to return to his village to share the Gospel. God provided financially for him through Marco's donors, and they helped build a house and a church where Ciro now serves with his wife Dolores and his children Jose Luis and Odalis. It was worth the cold showers I took to be able to spend three nights with them and see their ministry. I preached a Gospel message both in the morning and evening services. Ciro says that many of the people who come to his church are unsaved. They attend regularly and listen, but they won't respond. He says, "We trust God to work in their hearts." Ciro is well-respected in his village. (On that same day pastors Vicente and Pascual had a combined baptism service in another part of southern Mexico where seven were baptized.)



Vicente (far right) & Pascual (blue shirt) at the combined baptism

On Tuesday, we set out before 6 a.m. to travel fourteen hours to Bécál, Campeche, Mexico. Our journey took us back across the mountains of Chiapas, across a small part of the state of Tabasco, to the state of Campeche. There, in a city known for its Panama hats, Jose Luis Uc serves alongside his wife Martha and their three daughters. He is another one who went to Cancún for work years ago. A lady in the Cancún church invited the Uc daughters to attend the church, but Jose Luis and Martha wouldn't attend. One day they were having a terrible argument when one of the daughters, through tears, begged them to go to church. Jose Luis promised that they would. The next week was the first time he had ever entered a Christian church. He loved the music and the sense of community. They went back that night and were saved. They studied the Bible for a whole year with Marco before God called Jose Luis to preach. He studied for the ministry for three additional years and then returned to his hometown of Bécál, where God provided a house and church through Marco's generous donors. It was a privilege to preach a Gospel



Marco, Jose Luis, & Jeff in Bécál message to a full church at the Wednesday night service.

On Thursday, we drove about two hours to the town of Valladolid, Yucatán, a city of about 100,000 people, plus an additional 20,000 college students. This is the home of one of our newer missionary pastors, Vicente Puc. He also had gone to Cancún for work. Someone invited his wife Deysi to Marco's church, and she started attending regularly.



Marco (right) at a meal with Deysi and Vicente in Valladolid

She would invite her husband, but he wouldn't go. He said, "Sundays are my day off." Eventually, after an argument with her, he promised that he would attend. He said, "I wasn't looking for God, but God directed in my life, and I was saved." His wife and daughter were also saved, but his extended family remains staunch Catholics. After three of years training with Marco, Vicente returned to his hometown and started a church. This is another house and church that God provided through Marco's donors. Most of the people in attendance the evening of our service were believers, so I challenged them to be the "light of the world."

Friday, we drove to Chemax, about thirty minutes away. We had a group of people from the Valladolid church that joined us at the church and home of Pascual Balam. He and his wife, Leydi, are of Mayan descent. Earlier in the afternoon, following lunch with Pascual, I had him show me a Mayan Bible and videoed him reading John 3:16 in Mayan. Many of the people in his town, including his parents, mainly speak a Mayan dialect. We had another good group of people who attended the service, including many from Pascual's family. I

(continued on page 4)

Page 4

Making Disciples

(continued from page 3)



Jeff with Pascual & Leydi in Chemax preached on the Prodigal Son. Pascual was also a construction worker who Marco saw saved in Cancún, was later trained for the ministry, and returned to his hometown. His church and house were also provided by gifts from Marco's donors. [Editor's note: The donations paid for the land and building materials, but the Bible school students, most of whom were trained in construction, built the houses and churches – without blueprints!]

On Sunday, we were at FFBCC. This is the mother church to all the others we visited. Marco asked me to re-preach the message on the Prodigal Son. We had a big crowd at the church. Toño, Ciro's son, who also trained with Marco for the ministry, is the youth pastor at the church and leads the music. I witnessed something unique in the service. The congregation quoted several verses of Scripture together. They also took time to review the chapter content of the Gospel of Matthew. This kind of thing took place in each of the churches. Marco's disciples are making disciples.

Sunday evening, we traveled about an hour away to Playa del Carmen, where Tomas Noh ministers. He grew up in a Catholic home, and his parents drank a lot, though he never did. He said, "I was the type of person that trusted in my own wisdom." One Christmas when his family was away, he decided to go to Marco's church. He was saved through the ministry of FFBCC. He told me, "My life was completely changed." He was disciplined by Marco for three years. For the past six years, he and his wife, Kleyni, have been working in a church plant where, again, God provided the facilities through Marco's donors. I preached on Joshua 3-4 about the faith that it took to cross the Jordan.



Tomas & Kleyni with daughter, Katherine

Amazing! I don't know how else to describe this trip. We saw some amazing sites. We visited some amazing churches and visited with some amazing people. We saw God's amazing grace and His amazing provision. Marco is an amazing missionary that God is using to do an amazing work of building disciples in the land of the Maya — disciples who make disciples. †

To see an online album of photos from my trip visit <http://emuinternational.org/jeffmexico>

ALONG THE WAY...

(continued from page 2)

The **Steels** are out west and in Alaska visiting their supporting churches in May. They are flying to Alaska where someone is loaning them a car. Any time you travel west of the Plains states, you have to cover a LOT of miles. The Steels need to raise \$400-500 per month more in support. Pray that they will do so before they return to Uruguay in July.

On March 24, one of the MEU board members in Uruguay drove to Rivera, in the north of the country, to participate in the installation service of **Pablo Billañán** as the new pastor of Templo Calvario de Rivera. **Hector Gomez** has retired after pastoring the church for thirty years.



Pablo & Cristina Billañan being commissioned at Calvary Temple of Rivera

We trust this May newsletter is a blessing to you. And I hope your May is somewhat less stressful than mine. We know that the Lord will supply our needs in His timing. Thank you for your prayers and, when possible, your financial support. †

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