



CBM
embracing a broken world
through word & deed

MINISTRY UPDATE

The Soucys in Latin America

Dec 2021



*This is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us
and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
1 John 4:10*

Greetings from Guatemala!

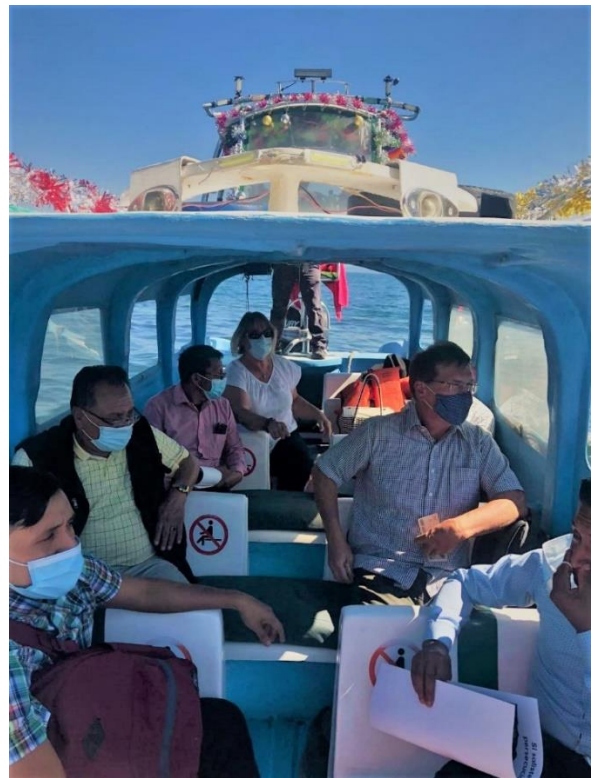
In the season of Advent, we remember to anticipate the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. While we wait, we do not have to be passive! We can move and act in **love**, even when it seems the good that we do will not change the outcome. Remember that you may be planting seeds that lay dormant for a season only because they are waiting for the right time to spring to life and fully bloom. Small acts of love, like calling a friend or bringing someone in need a meal can remind others, and ourselves that goodness, justice, and **love** are not lost. Dr. Phil Munroe shared these words in a recent letter to the Trauma Healing Institute and I share them here as a reminder of the hope we have that God see us and cares for us, that we can see how He is working in our communities if we look and that we can join him through caring for others in practical ways.

Posada practice

Do you remember the days when you might gather a group of friends and go door to door at Christmas time, singing carols, maybe collecting gifts of money to donate to a good cause while wishing your neighbours a Merry Christmas? In Guatemala there is a tradition called **Posada**, still alive today that has groups of people going door to door to act out the Christmas story often complete with a “donkey”. Those who receive the actors often carry out their own part of the story by locking their doors and not allowing anyone in. Ultimately the doors are opened, and the story is played out again before everyone sits down to share a festive meal. Our Guatemalan colleague Byron Velasquez says, “We love these two weeks before Christmas, visiting our neighbours and sharing the story of Christmas. We don’t have to cook a meal for many days!”

Getting out!

Guatemala’s COVID numbers are comparable to Canada’s, at least cases per million and deaths per million, however vaccination status does not compare; in Canada, 86% are totally vaccinated but only 30% in Guatemala. The reasons for this are varied and include access to vaccine, fear, lack of trust in the government and health system and disbelief in the severity of the disease. While COVID remains a concern for us here as well as for you in Canada, we have recently begun to venture into communities with our local church partners.



On the way to a Micah group meeting in San Marcos – as Byron commented, “We’re all in the same boat!”

A recent visit to Lake Atitlan brought us together with a dozen pastors from the region who meet monthly to study and learn together what it practically means to be the church in and with the community.

Our colleague Byron led a conversation that had us looking at Nehemiah and his first steps towards addressing the challenges of rebuilding the wall, a process where Nehemiah went to the people and asked questions to understand the situation, having his heart broken by what he learned, being able then to focus his prayers so that he could then follow and carry out God's plan.

A recent survey shows that these pastors serve in churches where 70% seldom if ever consider serving their community a part of their mission, where 90% of churches have little or no relationship with their community, 70% have never participated in any voluntary community work, and less than 10% have tools to practically serve their communities. Meeting and learning together has been so valuable for these pastors as they lead their churches in this context.

We were also able to sit down with some new partners to help them work through the process of planning and implementing local church initiatives with CBM support.

In another community, we met with church leaders who have developed an association of small coffee growers, pooling their production and power to eliminate the middleman involved in selling their coffee so that the individual growers would be able to receive more of the profit from their crop. Coffee is a part of the culture with several generations working in coffee production. Many of these farmers live in poor, isolated indigenous rural communities. With so much working against them, they are encouraged and motivated by the love of the others that has had some looking at Jesus with a new understanding and reminding them that goodness, justice, and love are not lost.

This time spent with people, face to face, has been a joy to us both after many months of isolation and Zoom communication. With our colleague, Byron Valesquez, we will be visiting our partners in El Salvador during the week of December 13. Pray for us as we connect with Semillas de Nueva Creación, ENLACE, and our Baptist

partners ABES and FEBES. We pray we can be an encouragement to them in their service as they are to us.

SENT

CBM's vision and learning trip experience has gone virtual during these times of challenging travel. These new virtual visits have brought our Canadian church partners to a Lebanese home to make tabbouleh and hummus, to cook peanut soup in Bolivia, painting in Rwanda, and early next year to experience coffee from bean to cup in Central America. These trips give visitors the opportunity to experience a bit of culture and have fun while hearing inspirational stories about how God is working through our partners in the region. Check out these opportunities for you and your friends to join in from the comfort of your own home or church. For more details connect to Louise Hannen lhannem@cbmin.org

We thank God for:

- Our healthy families in Canada who support us and encourage us as we live in different lands.
- Our colleagues around the world who inspire us.
- Health and ability to serve God where He has placed us.
- This Christmas season to reflect and share with others the love that God has lavished on us.
- You our supporters for your prayers and faithful giving.

Please pray for:

- Vaccination rates to increase in Guatemala, one of the least fully vaccinated populations in LA.
- Safe travels to El Salvador
- Cultural humility as we share and learn together with our partners.
- Our partners in Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Bolivia as they enter the demands and opportunities that come with the Christmas season.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas season.

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