

NEWSLETTER

March 2023



Latin America

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PICTURE HIGHLIGHTS



Ignacio Salazar (Zacapoaxtla, Mexico): The paver floor was finished in time for the church to host a packed Children's Club meeting.



Gabriel Macancela (Ecuador): In February, a couple from the church (*seated*) shared biblical wisdom on love and friendship with the youth group.



A new sign welcomed visitors to the first official service at Bible Baptist Church of Shell (**Manuel Macancela, Ecuador**).

“Join the journey . . . not just where we’ve been, but where we’re going.”

Baptist Evangelistic Ministry Endeavors – Latin America

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Newfound Hope in Christ

Last month, we asked you to pray for **Gustavo Mis Alejos** and the church plant in **Chetumal, Mexico**. Escalating extortion calls, several robberies, and attempted robberies within the past few months (one that had Pastor Gustavo facing an armed man) led the group to leave their meeting place. While they searched, saved, and prayed for another, they met in one another's homes. Gustavo remarked that not only did this experience impress upon the church members that the *iglesia*, the "church," refers to those saved by faith in Christ rather than a physical place, but it also provided opportunities to draw closer to unchurched neighbors, family, and friends who were more open to in-home meetings.

Thank the Lord, our collective prayers were answered: Gustavo just signed a lease on a house that will serve as the new meeting place.



A view of the inside of the house and the large covered patio

Pastor Gustavo and the believers of Community Baptist Bible Church are praying that those who had interest in the in-home meetings will start coming to regular services at the new location, as well as those who have just started attending regularly. An elderly lady named Ana has been coming since Christmas and has a great desire to learn about God although she cannot read or write.



In **Saltillo, Mexico**, as well, people are recognizing their need for something more in their lives. **Josué González Cano** and a few other men of the church began a boys' soccer team last month in order to bring the gospel message to a wider audience.



So far, they have made new contacts and renewed old relationships. Saul, a young man who Pastor Josué met about a year ago but later lost contact with, joined the team. Saul has struggled with family problems and antidepressant abuse in the past. Saul asked Josué when the church meets for services. He came to church along with his family and has sought pastoral counseling. Please pray for Saul and his family, that they would find something more in Christ.

In Saltillo, depression is rampant and the suicide rate is high. A few months ago, a man named Javier Nieves was so overcome with depression that he tried to take his own life. But, as Josué said, "the Lord took care of him." Javier recovered from his injuries and started seeking God. He came to church and over the course of several Sundays, Josué and



the believers shared the gospel with Javier. With a new hope in Christ, Javier attends regularly and is in counseling. He even prepared a Christmas dinner for the whole church.

Another Church Plant in Mexico

José Vazquez Zenteno, along with his wife, Erica, and their 6 children are working in **Tijuana, Mexico**. Consistent street evangelism efforts on José's part have brought 26 new visitors to church, with several professions of faith since the beginning of the year.



The church in Tijuana held the first meeting of the new youth group in January, during which two teens accepted Christ. Pray for this growing church plant!

This growth has laid the foundation for more targeted church ministries. The couples of the church have sectioned off into their own Sunday School class. Currently, they are meeting under a tarped area, while the church is in the process of building an addition that will be another Sunday School classroom.



An overhead view of the youth group meeting from the unfinished roof of the building addition

Growth at GBC in Ccachona, Peru

There have been so many young people coming to Bible club at **Grace Baptist in Ccachona, Peru**, that **José Churata** and the church members have decided to separate the children and teens. Starting this month, the children will meet at 3:00 PM and the teens will meet at 5:00 PM every Saturday. Pray for strength for José and the church helpers!



Pastor José asked for prayer for the spiritual growth of the believers and their families.



The 4 baptisms in December brought the total of saved and baptized church members to 11. Since then, José has focused on reiterating the significance of Lord's Supper to the believers and teaching those who have yet to make decisions for Christ.



Letter from the Director

Dear friends, prayer warriors, and supporters of BEME-LA,

The fickle weather conditions and drastic changes to the landscape during March have earned descriptions from “lion” to “lamb.” Our travels and experiences at BEME this month have mirrored those descriptions. Long days, tiresome nights, travel challenges and delays, driving in heavy rains, ice, and snow were contrasted with many life-changing decisions for Christ, educational advancements for staff (business conferences, classes, academic speaking opportunities), encouragement from believers, and several new supporting churches (VA, MI, and MN). Our faithful church starters have experienced everything from severe loss of homes, land, and building delays in their congregations due to weather and floods, to celebrations of church anniversaries, souls saved, baptisms and very fruitful evangelistic campaigns, camps, and conferences.



This year, March reminds us of Psalm 19. The Psalmist describes God’s grand creation (vs. 1-6), God’s truth shared with man (vs. 7-10), God’s work within man (vs. 11-13), concluding with a challenge to continue serving (vs. 14): *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”* One pastor stated, *“the composition of Psalm 19 as a whole brought David much needed relief...and has given hope to many generations of people who have struggled.”* Yes, the Lord is always close to his children through life’s changes. Just think, it is in the struggling exhaustion of new tender plants pushing, twisting, expanding, that turn the frozen soil of winter into the lush fruitful fields of spring. Let’s keep faithful, keep serving, and God will give the increase. 1 Cor. 3:7

Andrew Counterman

Join the journey...not just where we’ve been, but where we’re going.

If you are interested in scheduling an in-person presentation of BEME-LA at your church, please call (410) 804-3767 or email counterman.andrew@gmail.com.

A Church Begins, Another Thrives in Uruguay

BEME-LA has taken on another church planter in Uruguay! Pastor **Andrés Ramírez**, his wife Maria Eugenia, and their children Sara, Berenice, and Josias are starting a church in the city of **Nueva Helvecia**.



The Ramirez family has been witnessing and visiting contacts faithfully in the Juan Lacase neighborhood, and several people have made professions of faith over the past few months.



A meeting of the brand new church in Nueva Helvecia



Among the new converts is 80(+)-year-old Maria Breitos. Please pray for spiritual growth and for the Ramirez family as they minister.

Artigas, Uruguay is one of many cities—primarily in Latin America, but in other areas, the U.S. included—that participates in some form of the annual *Carnaval* holiday. Carnival traditions vary widely depending on the customs of the area, but their origins are tied to the time before the 40-day Lenten season and are characterized by a celebration of worldly indulgence over a period of days or weeks.

To have an idea of the challenges Pastor **Gustavo González** and the church in Artigas face during Carnival, those living in the U.S. could imagine Mardi Gras as being a much more integral part of the culture as a whole, right outside their doorsteps.

Over the past few years, the youth group has grown to 20 faithful teens, some of whom have unbelieving families that participate in Carnival. The Lord gave Pastor Gustavo the foresight to plan a teen retreat that overlapped the heaviest days of Carnival. Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez, a couple that often helps with the youth group, welcomed the teens to stay at their home for 3 days while they were out of town. Without this retreat, Gustavo said that several of the teens would have been obligated by their families to participate in Carnival activities.



It is hard to believe that almost 2 years have passed since BEME took on the González family. At the time, they were having Zoom Bible studies with a handful of people. Today, they meet in a rented building (*which they are growing out of—please pray!*) with 40 children faithfully attending Sunday School and 25 adults in services (most are saved and baptized members), in addition to the teens.

Prayer Requests

- For a **full presentation schedule, good health and safety** in travel
- For our **goal of starting 20 new churches** and **expanding into Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile** this year
- For the many **current building projects and future land purchases**
 - * Provision for the **completion of a third-floor addition** - **Rodrigo Valdespino**, Mexico
 - * **Continued provision** for roof/building repair - **Cristian Alvarado Quintana**, Colombia
 - * **Saving to purchase land:** José Churata, Javier Peña, Joel Choqqe Arce, Gustavo Mis, Ignacio Salazar, Hetler Ramos, Gustavo González
 - * **Praise the Lord!** - **Manuel Macancela finalized the purchase of a 3122 ft² plot of land in Shell.** The next step is build a fence or wall enclosure, a covered metal structure, and 2 bathrooms
- For **vehicle repair (Andrés Ramirez, Uruguay) and provision of vehicles for Josué González and Gustavo Mis (Mexico)** to transport people to and from church and for other ministry purposes. A dear 77-year-old lady of Josué's church shared her burden for the children in a neighboring community, and since then, a few people of the church have started selling food to raise money for a van.
- For **protection of those in Peru**, with the current **political unrest and recent severe damaging floods**
 - * Our current national pastors: **José Churata, Ernesto Vera, Sacarias Ccopa, Hetler Ramos, Hernan Huari**, as well as **many former BEME church starters and U.S. national missionaries**
- For **Missionary Buddy Fitzgerald (Peru)** after the removal of a cancerous tumor on his spinal cord, the next steps are to determine if more are present and course of treatment.
- For the **visitation and discipleship efforts** of each one of our national pastors.
 - * **Gustavo Huamani**, Uruguay: this month, they have **4 upcoming baptisms, evangelism training** for the church members, and **the wedding of Cristian and Marlene!**

Thank you once again for your investment of time, prayer, and financial support of BEME-LA and the national pastors in Latin America. *We are thrilled to partner with you for the cause of Christ!*

For online giving, please visit www.myclickandgive.com. First-time donors must set up a secure account. Select **Central Missionary Clearinghouse** as the merchant for the account of **Andrew Counterman**.

The following coupon is provided to designate mail-in offerings. **Please make checks payable to Central Missionary Clearinghouse**, the agency which oversees BEME funding and financial transactions.



I would like to have a part in Latin American ministries with a tax-deductible gift of \$ _____ for:

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