

Feb/Mar 2024

Stephen & Erika Jones

Dear Family and Friends,

We are very pleased with how the Lord is bringing our time here in Colombia to an end. We are seeing more and more confirmation that we are following His will. Last time we told y'all that a group of volunteers from Bogota was going to continue evangelizing and discipling the people we've been working with. However, that was taking a lot longer than anticipated because they wanted approval from their church pastors since they are church members. Their meetings kept being postponed. Also because of some comments and previous situations, we started to lose confidence that this group would be coming. At the same time, we were searching and looking for churches in the surrounding areas with few positive results. Finally, early in February, we were pleased to find a Baptist church in a town that is only 45 minutes from Ambalema and 30 minutes from Chorrillo. We visited the church building on Friday and found ourselves speaking with the pastor who lives at the church building in an upstairs apartment style home.

He has a wife and two daughters, ages 10 and 14. Pastor Alex and his family started the church plant nine years ago, and prior to that they assisted another pastor planting a church in a different town. Pastor Alex is also a musician and has taught several willing, young people in the church to play instruments, so they have a small worship team.

Since first meeting Pastor Alex and family, we spent some time getting to know them, and we shared with them what we've been doing in Ambalema and El Chorrillo: evangelism, in-home Bible studies, discipleship, and even literacy classes for a time. We shared with them that God is calling us back to the U.S. but we didn't have peace without knowing who was going to continue discipling and caring for the families and kids that we have been working with. We invited them to come with us to Ambalema and Chorrillo. They readily accepted our invitation, sharing with us how they have been wanting to expand into some of the nearby areas for some time now but haven't been able to do so. Just this year they began emphasizing the need among their congregation to spread the gospel. On their first trip with us to Ambalema and Chorrillo, we focused mainly on introducing them to those families. The second week we took them with us and I taught Bible lessons and would give Pastor Alex opportunities to join in and add his thoughts during the lessons.



He is well-rooted in the Bible and very knowledgeable. The people have taken very well to him. The next week we went together again and they prepared the lessons for the adult groups and the kids, and in this visit, we were their helpers. This past Friday, Erika and I were in Bogota for me to fly with dad to visit the potential mobile unit partners and Pastor Alex went with his wife to Chorrillo and taught the families there! We have also been taking note of how they communicate with the people, and they tell them the church is there for them, they want them to feel like they are part of the church, they're going to continue to come to Ambalema and Chorrillo, and they want the people to join them for Sunday worship or other services during the week!

We have felt a huge burden being lifted off of us as we see God's hand in this transition more and more. Another thing, the group from Bogota got approval and financial support to be able to make trips to Ambalema and Chorrillo. That process took longer than any of us anticipated, but God worked it all out better than we expected. These trips will be focused on supporting and helping Pastor Alex however he needs.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15: 58

As far as the Drive-In Mobile Unit, we are in the process of relocating it to a church on the Colombian coast. We should have a definitive answer before the end of the month if that is God's will. Everything so far is very favorable, and we are only waiting for the church members to meet and vote about taking on the responsibility of movie ministry. Erika and I have been working to prepare the van to go to its new owners. We had body work done, had it repainted, fixed some of the seats that were tearing, and other odds and ends to bring it back to excellent condition for the coming years of use! We are fully trusting God will use this van greatly in the future as He has in the past!



We are looking forward to what God has in store for us once we arrive back in the U.S. I'm excited that Drive-In will be able to coordinate more now with the Hispanic community. I look forward to coordinating movie nights in Spanish at Drive-In Park and also working with churches to present mobile movies in Spanish. There are many more possibilities too, like pavilion reservations, church-led soccer tournaments, Spanish church services, and other events. Aside from Hispanic connections, I'm looking forward to helping manage the current facilities and further developing the park. The ministry has bigger plans for the park which include a large building with offices, a gymnasium, a kitchen, and a giant fixed, outdoor movie screen. We are years away, but excited about the plan!

Eri and I continue to work on closing this chapter of our lives here in Colombia. There are several things that we are worried about and feel behind on. We still need to sell our SUV, our motorcycle, and most importantly our HOUSE! We are praying for the Lord to help us with these things, but ask for your prayers too that these things will sell quickly and be a blessing to the next owner. We are shipping some of our furniture and appliances to the U.S. in a half-container. Additionally, we'd appreciate your prayers for Pastor Alex and his family and the church, Iglesia Bautista Centro de Esperanza (Center of Hope Baptist Church); for the people in Ambalema and Chorrillo to continue connecting well with Pastor Alex; and for the group of volunteers and their support of Pastor Alex. Pray for confirmation of the group's calling to be missionaries and discernment of where to serve in the future.

As always, thank you so much for your prayers and support!

In Christ,
Stephen and Erika

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. 1 Corinthians 10:31



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