Prayers for Panama Project

It was 9:45 on January 28 that four Village Church members checked in at the South Bend airport, the beginning of a long anticipated adventure! Harry and Sharon Miller, and Don and Edith Habenicht were headed off on another Maranatha Volunteers Mission Project.

This trip was the fulfillment of many anxious prayers. First of all, our highways and runways were free of ice and snow, allowing us an on-schedule beginning.

Our plane change in Atlanta was interesting. While we waited for departure, first one, then another purple tee-shirted person began to show up from different directions. Some faces we recognized from previous projects, while others were new to us. Maranatha had provided the tee shirts and requested all to wear them to our destination, for identity purposes. We soon heard of numerous other answered prayers in flight changes, weather problems, and other circumstances.

The next obstacles were immigrations and customs inspections in Panama City. Since everyone was traveling with so much food, medicines, tools, and VBS supplies, customs personnel began to question all of us. Again, lots of quick prayers were answered and all made it through.

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Rhiannon’s New Life in Christ

I did not really understand about who Jesus was while I was growing up. I started to feel differently when my Uncle Paul and Aunt Patricia came for a visit when I was living in Texas in 2012. We had gone to an Adventist church one Sabbath day in August. I really wanted to have a better understanding of who Jesus was and how the Adventist church differed from other churches, but that did not happen until I moved up here to Berrien Springs. When I started going to Village Church I saw many things that were good and I wanted to be a part of it.

Soon after, Jon and Stacy Gusky started giving me Bible study lessons that really opened my eyes to what God was about and why He sent Jesus to earth. I learned that all who wanted to follow Him could, and be blessed, and eventually go to live in heaven with Him at the second coming. I feel so blessed to be part of a church, and be accepted by all, and most of all, be loved by God and Jesus. It is an amazing feeling!

Rhiannon Alvarado-Roman
Heart to Heart

Some people feel numbers are impersonal, but the numbers got real personal for the shepherd who finished counting his sheep and realized that the attendance was 100 minus one (the story from Jesus in Luke 15:1-7). His database showed that one was missing from the fold. The heart of stewardship that compelled the shepherd to count was the same heart that compelled him to search every hill and ravine until he found the one who lost touch.

The Mission Lifeguard project of the North American Division (NAD) revealed that only 10% of our churches have a list of the young people at their church. Youth leaders in our conferences are urging that churches that want to do something more for their youth should start with a database. A recent Barna Research study of Adventist young people reveals that 63% of Adventist young adults who are currently unengaged from the church see themselves as possibly reconnecting with the Adventist church sometime in the future. They are waiting for someone like you with a shepherd heart to drop in, make a call, type an email, or send a text.

According to the 2014 Year End report made by NAD Secretary, Alexander Bryant, 28% of the people who stopped attending our North American churches said they left because of “no big issue.” They just drifted away. One man said there was a sickness in the family, then they went on vacation, and then church just kind of slipped out of their lives. Many never make a conscious choice to leave. Life just happens for them. That means they are just waiting for a shepherd like you to show up and do what a shepherd does. The report showed that 40% who stopped attending said they were never contacted by anybody.

The Village church provides opportunities throughout the year where you can invite the unengaged back. March 28 brings an excellent opportunity for youth and young adults to reconnect with Village. Let’s not be too busy or shy to make that invite. Your feedback in January gave me 84 names to look for. Your personal invite now will give them a way back. Thank you for allowing the Lord to use you to answer prayers.

Pastor Joe

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Early the next morning about half of us were bussed to the airport to meet the Air Panama plane for Changuinola up on the Caribbean coast near the border of Costa Rica. This flight took about an hour, instead of 12-14 hours by land. As we were approaching the airport we began seeing the large banana and pineapple plantations operated by United Fruit Company, the parent company of Chiquita bananas. The group boarded two mini buses and headed up the mountains to our project camping site.

The plane returned to Panama City to get the second half of our volunteers. This group should have arrived in just a few hours. When they didn’t arrive, there were more prayers said quickly. It was about four hours later that we received a message. Due to intense ground fog, the plane had left the mainland for an island out in the ocean where it could land and wait several hours for it to be able to land on the mainland. Once all the group was together we had the organizational meeting to divide personnel into the various projects and claim our luggage that had just arrived by truck.

We had 68 volunteers, plus the various leaders. There were two construction groups, a paint group, medical people, the VBS group, and those who had agreed to be with the kitchen crew.

The days were long, but went by quickly. The first Sabbath, we were divided into several groups to attend the various churches that were being helped.

The paint crew painted several churches, and did painting and general repairs in the large S.D.A. elementary school. Their new school year would begin in March with over 400 students expected. Two doctors with their crew and translators did a great medical clinic seeing over 600 patients that week. The VBS group had between 85 - 120 children each day. The construction crew divided into two groups: one having to go by dug-out canoes about an hour up river to a new church site, taking all their building materials and tools along. They finished all the steel structure and roofed it. The rest will wait for another group to finish. The main construction was a finished one-day church along with an attached one-day unit structure and roof to be used on Sabbath School rooms.

Our second Sabbath, services were held in the new church, and it was dedicated, with the Panama Mission president being there.

The kitchen crew was challenged by all the lunches to be ready each morning, a hearty breakfast prepared by 7 a.m., and then a good, balanced supper ready for everyone’s return.

Quite often people will ask, “Wouldn’t it be more economical to just send the money down for these various projects and save so many travel expenses?” Maranatha long ago learned that the blessings received from a project of this nature goes both directions! Those participating always return with indescribable blessings and a greater determination to be ready for Christ’s return. Also, there are usually non-church members who accept God’s challenge to follow Him. This is the whole purpose for our sharing of our blessings for God’s great work.

Don Habenicht
Welcome to the Family!

Janine Kerbs was born in Coloma, Michigan and attended school in Watervliet. At the age of seven, her mother became a Seventh-day Adventist, and Janine attended church school for her third grade year. Mrs. Barrett was her teacher, and Janine remembers studying the journeys of Paul, and wondering who this man Paul was!

Janine took elementary education at Andrews, and graduated in 1958. She soon began teaching grades two, three, and four at the Hartford Church School. Through the years Janine taught kindergarten in Coloma, homeschooled, and taught again at the Hartford Church School.

She married in 1959, and over the next fifteen years became the mother of four children.

Her eldest son, Steven, is an x-ray technician in Hawaii. Her daughter Holly lives in Austria with her husband, who serves in the pastoral ministry. (You may have read the her son-in-law’s thrilling story, A Way of Escape, regarding his adventure of escaping from Communist Romania.) Janine’s second son, Keith, is an academy teacher in Washington state, and her daughter Kara works locally at Adventist Frontier Mission. (Kara is the author of A Way of Escape.)

Janine became acquainted with many young ladies at Indiana Academy over several years while Kara served as girl’s dean in Cicero. On Friday evenings the girls enjoyed coming in to their home for home-baked bread.

Janine loves to read. Her favorite book of the Bible is Isaiah; she loves the Spirit of Prophecy books, June Strong’s writing, and mission stories. Her children have accused her of reading too many mission stories to them, to the point where mission just became part of their lives!

We welcome Janine to our Village family!

Bible Trivia

The crowd is growing! Both young and old scrambled for answers at the recent Bible Trivia vespers.

The next opportunity to join the fun is the first Sabbath evening of April!

The Numbers relating to Sanctuary Renewal (SR)

This article is designed to inform you about the flow of revenue for SR. We want to keep it simple, yet accurate.

2013 – At the conclusion of 2013, Village Church had two funds related to SR. They were:

• Building Fund Savings - - - - - $ 49,090
• Lake Union Revolving Fund - $120,949

Total SR Funds $170,039.

During 2013 there were 89 giving units who gave $37,239 to the Lord for SR.

2014 – We engaged both Lloyd Condon of Arkos Design and Busch Construction to address our long overdue Egress issues from the basement level of our building. This was designated Phase One of SR.

The number of giving units in support of SR increased to 159 from 89, a growth of 56%. PTL! The revenue jumped 334% to $124,291. PTL!

A total of $187,757 was paid out of SR funds during 2014 to accomplish Phase One. The Balance on Hand in the two SR Funds as of Dec. 31, 2014 was:

• Building Fund Savings - - - - - $ 46,077
• Lake Union Revolving Fund - $ 72,450

• Total SR Funds - - $118,527

2015 – The congregation in a January Business Session voted 98-2 to move forward with Phase Two of SR which is to focus on the remodeling of the front of the sanctuary with a new baptistery lowered to the level of a new platform. A pledge of $100,000 has been made to Phase Two which will be realized soon, possibly this month.

SR 2015 Income to Feb. 28 totals $23,989.

The Balance Sheet for SR as of February 28, 2015:

• Building Fund Savings - - - - - $ 72,279
• Lake Union Revolving Fund - $ 72,450

Total SR Funds - - $144,729

Paul Pellandini
**Keeping Connected**

**Spring Break Mission Trips**

Let’s remember to pray for the current mission trips:

- the church Amazon trip
- the seminary trip to Cuba
- Rod, Nancy, & Nathan Church to Kenya

**With joy** we celebrated the birth of Kayleigh Lynn Offenback on February 28 after vespers. Kayleigh was born on December 24 to Brenton and Rachelle Offenback.

Brenton is our Minister of Music and blesses us with his skillful organ playing. Kayleigh is bringing much joy to Brenton and Rachelle’s lives. We are blessed to have Kayleigh as part of our church family.

Congratulations, Ashley Randolph, on your recent induction to the National Honor Society!

**Coming!**

**Spring Week of Prayer with Elder Garry Sudds**

April 18 - 24

Supper, study, prayer

Kid’s programming

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. . . . And a threefold cord is not easily broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12.

Please send all newsletter submissions to collene.kelly@gmail.com.