

September/October 2023

# MISSIONS



## Sharing the Gospel in Spiritually Neutral Uruguay

CMML Visits  
Missionaries in  
Japan

A Team Builds  
Wheelchairs for the  
Dominican Republic

New Opportunities  
for Young People at  
IBCM8



# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY CABE PILLETTE

## God's Spectacular Timing

**D**isciple making takes time if you want real, lasting spiritual fruit. Otherwise, Paul would have called it “a walk in the park,” not “labor” (1 Corinthians 15:58). That labor involves persecution, perseverance, patience, prayer, and pitfalls, and reigning above all that is God’s kind providence. To see something eternal, our labor and His providential timing must be at work. The outcome is spectacular—but slow (Mark 4:30–32).

### A chronological mistake

God’s Word describes in its pages the spectacular growth of His spiritual kingdom. Those of us who are curious about how it works will read and re-read its pages, wondering if our labor and results compare at all to that inspired record. In so doing, we may make the unhappy mistake of letting compressed history discourage us.

By compressed history, I mean, for example, that the story of Daniel covers about 70 years of his labor for the Lord, but we can read it all in about 25 minutes. That is when we may make the unfortunate mistake of crying out to God that our ministry lacks power and extraordinary events. One divine response to our cries is, *Pay attention to chronology*.

Daniel’s ministry lasted about 70 years (605–535 BC). During that time, he enjoyed God’s spectacular intervention five times. If you divide 70 years by 5, you get an average of 15 years of nothing apparently spectacular between each great event.

After decompressing Daniel’s history this way, we must not be bullied into thinking that if God has not done anything spectacular in our ministry in the last 15 years, something is wrong with us. That would be a chronological mistake. And that is not the only lesson about God’s spectacular timing we learn from Daniel.

### A critical method

Daniel was the least among the heroes of the Bible. He is not described as someone of physical strength nor of great charisma, nor is he described as a warrior like Joshua or King David.

Daniel, in fact, did nothing exceptional—except, apparently, pray (Daniel 2:18; 6:10; 9:3–19; 10:12). The critical method for seeing God’s spectacular intervention is the prayer of His saints. That is our only true recourse. As Daniel’s three friends well knew, God can answer any prayer; God will answer and intervene; and if He doesn’t answer as we had hoped, He has a much better plan than our weak prayers can imagine (Daniel 3:17–18).

The power of real change is not found in us, His saints; it is found in God, and we access it through our constant, patient, trusting prayers. Those prayers not only invoke God to intervene but also instill in us a holy patience in His timing. What appears to us as God’s disinterest in our labor and strained prayers is merely a human frustration with God’s spectacular timing.

### A constant march

We labor tirelessly for the salvation of humans, and we wait on God to draw them (Mark 6:30–31; John 6:44). Then, we labor painfully for their sanctification, and we rely on the

Spirit to convict them (Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The weight of their growth lies heavy on us, but we realize it is God’s power and timing that we must wait for and enjoy (2 Corinthians 11:28; Philippians 2:13). We invest in faithful believers, but we cannot inspire in them

a spiritual desire to grow or serve or lead—that is for God and God alone (2 Timothy 2:2).

We are in a constant and arduous march that relies fully on the power and spectacular timing of God Himself. As it turns out, true discipleship is a long-term investment. To that end, Paul says not to grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9). God’s timing is just right. It is spectacular, in fact. Wait for it, and pray for it.

Remember, allowing yourself to be cowed by the sound of success and great reports of God’s intervention elsewhere is often a mistake of chronology. So we humbly do what He has called us to do, and we circumscribe it with persistent prayer. That is when real things happen. We are in a long march, and your labor is not in vain. God’s spectacular timing is worth your patience. ■

*Cabe Pillette serves in Mexico.*

*We are in a long march, and your labor is not in vain.*

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No More Holy Week for

# URUGUAY

MINISTERING IN THIS SPIRITUALLY NEUTRAL COUNTRY

BY DIRK HINNENTHAL

Imagine a wrestling match: two huge fellows with a small-looking judge between them, struggling to keep them at bay. Well, that is how Uruguay looks on the map. The illustration is befitting since in my conversations with older, well-educated believers in Christ, I have learned that Uruguay has been quite smart in handling its two giant neighbors, Argentina and Brazil.

Our country of service possesses only 1.8 percent of the US land area. Uruguay is actually about the same size as the state of Missouri but with only a little more than half the population, so there is more space per capita here. The abundance of fertile soil in South America enables the prosperous agriculture industry to produce beef and milk as well as wool and rice—a supply that is distributed well beyond the continent's borders. Uruguay enjoys a moderate climate with no regular inclement events and an abundance of water from several lakes and rivers, the southern coastline, plentiful rainfall, and access to one of the largest aquifers on the planet, the Guaraní Aquifer. Politically, Uruguay has been stable ever since the end of a 12-year military dictatorship in 1985.

## Tourism Week replaces Holy Week

To understand Uruguay as a society, we must look at its history. The Spanish conquered and colonized it in the 16th century, bringing Roman Catholicism with it, and independence was attained almost 200 years ago. But more recent history set the foundation for what we see today: a secular society that is, by declaration, spiritually neutral.

In the early 1900s, President José Batlle had a significant experience with religion, and it triggered what we grapple with today. He had recently been inaugurated for his second term as president when his 18-year-old daughter died. A clergyman showed up at his residence and offered to pray so Batlle's daughter could get out of purgatory. Batlle was so outraged that the man would suggest his daughter was in purgatory that he pushed a far-reaching campaign of reforms that substantially diminished the Catholic Church's influence in the country. The fact that, around the same time, the government

renamed the country's Holy Week as "Tourism Week" may come as no surprise.

This was not Uruguay's first conflict between church and state. Fifty years earlier, the cemeteries had been secularized. The government took control of many burial practices, which had rested with the Catholic Church previously. Additionally, the government banned crucifixes in public hospitals.

The political elite of the 20th century became strongly influenced by France. Since many sought their education and philosophical guidance there, the writings and thoughts of Voltaire and Rousseau thus found their way into South America. One of the older Christian men with whom I love to speak put it this way: "Our nation is in the same spiritual state as the one from which we sought advice."

As a result, we live in South America's most humanist and secular society. One saying expresses the general sense. Try to say it; it's simple: *cada loco con su tema*. Everyone lives according to his or her own crazy idea. Develop your own belief. Respect the views of other people. Truth is negotiable.

There is freedom of religious gathering. Inside our churches, we can freely preach, and there is even an ongoing tent evangelism ministry, which, at times, receives some support from local authorities. In other areas, restrictions are getting tighter. One must not speak about God in public schools, for instance.

Despite the increasing secularism, the Brethren movement has been present in Uruguay since 1882, starting with a young Englishman who served in Argentina and began visiting Uruguay from there. The early years of the 20th century saw the first assemblies established in the area of Montevideo, the capital. The assemblies have made great progress, especially in the last 30 years, in commending national workers. At a yearly missions conference, these workers have ample opportunity to report on their work.







## Our background

Milca, my wife, was born and raised in a Christian family in Montevideo. She became a believer at age 17 while listening to a gospel message on the radio. I was born in Germany. As a backpacker, I did a fair bit of traveling throughout the world. Then, when I was 29 years old, the Lord found me while I was facing yet another bout with depression. Milca and I met later in Uruguay, where I had begun preparation for serving my Savior. We married in 1997 and had three children: Lynda and Rudi were born in Uruguay, and Sophia during our years in Texas. From there, Comunidad de Amor, a Hispanic assembly in Houston, commended our family in 2013.

## Churches here and there

We live in the department of Colonia, only 110 miles from the capital city. Colonia offers good road connections along the



western part of the country and, from there, to Argentina. Travelers can reach Argentina by crossing a bridge that spans the river that gave our country its name: *Uruguay* is

a word that comes from the Indigenous Guaraní language and means “river of the painted birds.”

So there are many towns we can visit from where we live, and since congregations here tend to be rather small and the progress slow, our visits are a very welcome encouragement to a worker or pastor. Sometimes, only one believer is responsible for every single Bible study and gospel message. He might also have to roll up his sleeves when maintenance work calls. And he may be the only one who drives to all the children’s homes, taking them to the church and then back. Many hats the believer must wear! Hence, great benefits result from visiting and encouraging the Lord’s servants.

In our ministry, we also interface with other conservative Bible-teaching congregations. The dissemination of literature and correspondence courses goes beyond the Brethren assemblies, and I have received speaking invitations from several churches, sometimes resulting from my acquaintance with a pastor.

In one case, this led to regular teaching and visiting in the most populous suburb of Montevideo, where a large Jewish community resides. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, these visits were truncated to merely virtual presence, but the doors



used to visit later said to someone, “This man Dirk is the only German friend I ever had.” Thank you, Lord!

for further cooperation are now open again. For a long time, I, as a German, felt awkward about interacting with and befriending Jewish people. However, my awkwardness eased significantly when a man we

## Outreach to kids and their parents

Missionary work here typically emphasizes outreach to children, as it is still surprisingly easy to take kids to our local chapel and have a Bible school with them. Parents usually let their children go confidently while they are not easily convinced to attend any meetings themselves. At the end of the school year (in December), some parents do show up, if only to see their kids act in a drama or recite Bible verses. At such a festive event, many hear the Gospel for the first time.

Likewise, youth meetings take place regularly, and several campsites operate in Uruguay. During the school vacations, many children and teens go to Bible-based summer camp.



## Beyond the local context

Translating books and other materials into Spanish has been part of Dirk's ministry for many years. Interestingly, such projects continue rolling in without interruption, so we reach out through e-books and printed matter, including a paper that deals with relevant issues.

Another way we reach beyond our local context is by teaching in the online seminary that the Brethren founded to serve students from all over Latin America. We are currently offering the second year of the baccalaureate program. It is uplifting to see a Zoom screen full of Christians from all walks of life and some 10 different countries—all willing to dig deeper into the Word.



Milca carries on an important counseling ministry, often by phone, with believers and other women who call on her. Milca is a prayer warrior and receives many requests. Please remember to uphold her in your prayers.

Lastly, following an invitation to Central America, I began contributing to a radio ministry in El Salvador. A 144-episode series

that teaches through the Bible is underway, and many of the messages have already aired.

## Prayers for Uruguay

Please pray for Uruguay and the Lord's work here. Our Colonia assembly, where I serve as an elder, is in the process of reunification. A division that occurred before our time here has now been overcome. For us, this reunion means serving among two dozen additional believers who were largely unknown to us previously—exciting times! Please pray for a fruitful joining of God's servants.

Also, Bible literacy must increase if we are to be a people ready to effectively share the Word with others. Many Christians do not go far when it comes to studying the Bible on their own. Please pray for a desire to study the Bible.

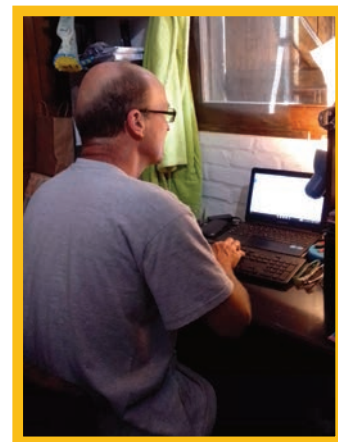
Keeping up courage can be a challenge for those in ministry, as things progress slowly in Uruguay. So pray for our spiritual courage. ■

*Dirk and Milca Hinnenthal are commended from Comunidad de Amor in Houston, Texas.*



**Page 4: (Left)** Dirk and Milca live in Colonia, about 100 miles from Uruguay's capital; **(Right, from top and L-R)** On a Sunday morning, Luis, a church leader, speaks to the believers in the Colonia assembly; Jorge, one of the Colonia assembly's elders, teaches a Bible lesson during an outdoor excursion; Dirk (right) joins missionary Ken Russell (center, MPH Day 23) for a missions-themed lesson at camp; Kids await a Bible program.

**Page 5: (Left)** Milca often counsels people by phone; **(Right, from top and L-R)** A group of kids and youth gathers inside the Colonia assembly; Sometimes, adults as well as children attend Sunday school events; Dirk's ministry includes translating material into Spanish; Dirk works on a translation project.







# UNREACHED AND IN BONDAGE—BUT GOD!

BY JOHN PEASLAND

Recently, I had the privilege of making a whirlwind, week-long trip around Japan with the dual purpose of visiting the missionaries served by CMML and understanding the challenges of the Japanese mission field.

From an areal standpoint, Japan is about four percent of the size of the United States. However, Japan has 38 percent of the US population. From a spiritual standpoint, Japan is considered 98 percent unreached, according to the Joshua Project, while four percent of the US population is considered unreached—mainly due to immigration. In fact, the world's second most populous unreached people group is the Japanese, second only to the Bengali Shaikhs in Bangladesh. For the last couple of years, CMML has been seeking to refocus the attention of US believers on the massive unfinished task around the world, so visiting Japan while in Asia for the International Brethren Conference on Mission (IBCM8) was a must for me. My father-in-law and brother-in-law, Arturo and Azriel Baca, accompanied me on my travels while also on their way to IBCM8 in Malaysia.

We stepped off the plane into Tokyo, the largest city in the world. (To give you an idea, it's about two times the size of New York City.) Immediately, the mass of humanity swallowed us up, and we were off to the races figuring out what train, of the hundreds leaving every hour, to take.

The Japanese culture is amazing to experience. Imagine millions of hardworking Japanese bustling around, every train and bus leaving right on schedule, all stations and streets meticulously maintained, and no trash to be seen on the ground anywhere—almost the extreme opposite of most of North America. Poverty is much less obvious in Japan than in most Western countries. There are almost no beggars, homeless, or even poorly dressed

Japanese to be seen. On the surface, Japanese society is one of orderly, peaceful bliss. However, under the façade of having it all together, the people are enslaved by their traditions, superstitions, and culture. Their overarching drive to meet others' expectations makes for an existence that is interpersonally peaceful but personally stressful and meaningless.

## Joy from a home fellowship in Tsu

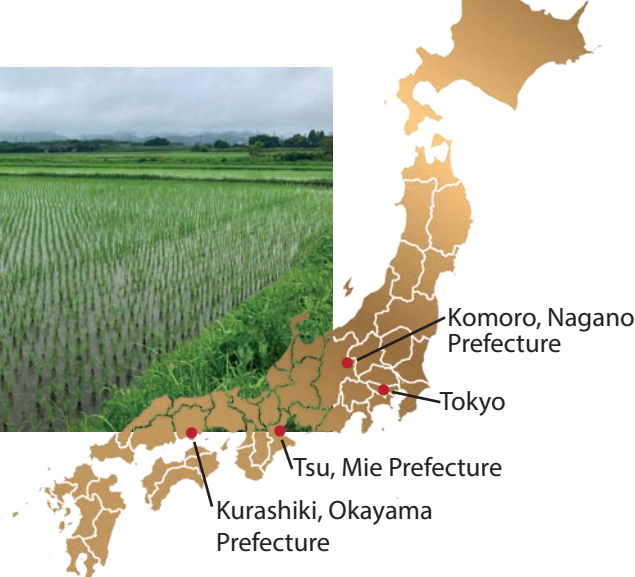
We traveled from Tokyo south to Nagoya, where Brock Smith (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 6) and his daughter Evangeline (10) met us at the train station and drove us further south to their home in Tsu, Mie Prefecture. Kelly and the rest of the kids—Zion (8), Jubilee (5), and Boaz (3), plus a baby on the way—welcomed us into their home. The next day, Sunday, we enjoyed fellowshiping in the Smith's home with the few believers that meet with them every Sunday. My father-in-law and I had the privilege of sharing the Word with the group before the Breaking of Bread. What a joy it was to meet the believers and hear of their love for the Lord!

On Monday, three believing women, one of whom, Mao, was recently saved, came over for their regular Bible study with Kelly. The group asked us to join them, and we shared from the Word with them. Please pray for these believers; each has family members who do not know the Lord. Pray especially for Mao as she takes her first steps of faith. Pray, too, for the Smiths as they seek the Lord's direction for their ministry in Japan.



**Top (L-R):** The smoke wafting from this pot symbolizes prayers at Zenkō-ji, the Buddhist temple; Pilgrims visiting one of Japan's many temples can stay in hostels like this one; Japan's natural beauty includes this waterfall near Karuizawa; Rice fields dot the countryside. **Above (L-R):** Japan's heavily trafficked train stations are clean and run on schedule; Three believers—Keiko, Kumiko, and Mao—gather in the Smiths' home for a Bible study and meal; The Smith kids enjoy having visitors!





## Prayers for spiritual health in Kurashiki

We had planned to travel later on Monday to Kurashiki, Okayama, where we would visit Bob and Megumi Longo (MPH Day 6); instead, we decided to make a day trip on Tuesday due to Bob's recent health concerns. Brock offered to drive us there—a three-and-a-half-hour trip.

Bob and Megumi graciously welcomed us into their home, and we spent a few hours together catching up on their ministry and encouraging one another from the Word. After a delicious meal at a local ramen place, we said goodbye and drove back to Tsu.

Please pray for Bob's health. He has undergone multiple surgeries recently and is recovering. Pray for the spiritual health and growth of the small group that meets at the assembly down the street from the Longos.



## History's influence on Japanese culture

We returned to Nagoya on Wednesday morning to catch a bullet train heading through the gorgeous countryside toward Komoro, Nagano Prefecture, north of Tokyo. Tim Marcy (MPH Day 6) picked us up at the train station in Saku, and we drove to his house on the outskirts of Komoro. On the way, Tim took us for a quick visit to castle ruins from the 1500s; now, the site features a museum and garden along with a Shinto shrine. Hundreds of years of history, tradition, and religion have played a role in creating today's Japanese culture.

After picking up Ryohei (16), the Marcys' foster son, from the bus stop, we arrived at the family's home, located a couple of houses away from an open field where rice grows and an ancient burial mound is a silent reminder of the region's history. Christiane and Kento (7), the Marcys' adopted son, welcomed us into their home. It was a joy to see Tim and Christiane pour love into Kento, a bundle of fun who requires special care due to his disabilities. Please pray for Kento's speech development. The doctors believe he may speak eventually. Pray also for Ryohei's salvation.



In the evening, Tim and Ryohei took us for a supper of sushi at a restaurant where the food arrives at your table via a miniature conveyor belt—delicious and interesting Japanese cuisine!

On Thursday morning, Tim took us to nearby Karuizawa, where he and Christiane had lived while studying the language. It is a beautiful area where we enjoyed eating local trout. As we talked, Tim walked us through much of this region's evangelical missionary work over the past 100 years and the history of Christianity in Japan.

In the afternoon, we accompanied Tim to a home Bible study

**Above (L-R):** John, Arturo, and Brock (center to right) visit Bob and Megumi Longo (left); Bob and Megumi Longo serve in an assembly down the road from their home; In Komoro, Tim Marcy showed his visitors a Shinto shrine on the site of 16th-century castle ruins; The Marcys pour much love and care into raising Kento.



with a few Japanese believers. Hearing their testimonies was heartwarming, and my father-in-law shared how the Lord has worked in his life since the loss of his wife last year. Pray for the Arai family as they live for Christ and share Him with those around them. Pray especially for their children and grandchildren, who still do not know Christ.



In the evening, we had a meal with two of Tim's English students. One of them is a local businessman who owns a chain of hardware stores. The other is a student finishing up high school. Both need the Gospel. Pray for Tim as he develops these relationships and shares the Gospel.

Before leaving, we spent a few hours meeting with Nathan and Maki Clappen, missionaries from Australia who have been in Japan for years and will join the Marcys in Komoro to plant a new assembly. Pray for unity and the Lord's guidance as the couples begin this work together. There is also the possibility of a Swiss family joining the team; please pray for this opportunity.

### Traditions and practices but no conviction

Instead of taking the train directly from Komoro back to Tokyo, Tim offered to drive us to Nagano, the host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics. We went not to see the Olympic sites but to visit the Zenkō-ji Buddhist temple, founded in 642 AD. There is no better way to understand the chains of the society than to see them firsthand at this temple.

From the thousands of prayers being written and tied to posts, left for the spirits to read and answer, to the monetary gifts pouring into the coffers of the Buddhist priests, the worshippers follow traditions and customs passed down from generation to generation, and there is a general lack of understanding as to what they believe and why. Importance is placed on

what is done rather than what is believed. Therefore, most Japanese struggle to listen to and understand the Gospel because they have little knowledge of their own religion to compare to the Bible's truths. They also cannot conceive the possibility that everything all Japanese have known for thousands of years is wrong. Imagine yourself in an honor-based society, where doing what is expected of you is the goal. You choose to believe that there is only one true God, and the gods you have paid homage to all your life are false. How can you consider turning away from all the traditions to serve the one true God and, in the process, all it means to be you, as a Japanese and as a member of your family?



But God. . . Amid this tremendous, humanly impossible situation, God is still working. What a joy it was to meet individuals like Mao in Tsu, the Arais in Komoro, and others who have been gloriously saved through the Gospel's transforming power! But there remains much work to be done. The work is difficult and slow. National believers and missionaries must spend many hours developing relationships to then spend many more hours explaining and studying the Word until the light of the Gospel, through the working of the Holy Spirit, breaks through.

Pray with me that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth many more laborers into this harvest field of Japan. So many Japanese have yet to hear the Gospel. Would the Lord have you carry the light into this spiritually dark but physically beautiful country? Amazingly, the door for missionaries is wide open. Missionary visas are relatively easy to obtain, but how much longer will this door remain open? May the Lord use North American believers to reach the thousands of Japanese students that come to the US and Canada every year. They, in turn, might return to their land with the Gospel.

May each of us be obedient to the role God calls us to. Some need to send others, some need to prayerfully and financially support others, and some need to go. May we be found faithful! ■

*John Peasland, CMML executive director*

**Left (clockwise from top):** At this sushi restaurant, food is delivered via a conveyor belt; The Marcys are thankful for their new partners Nathan and Maki Clappen; The group enjoyed hearing the Arai family's testimony. **Right (from top):** Prayers—written on ornaments or on strips of paper tied into bows—line a section of Zenkō-ji; This ornate Buddhist temple welcomes pilgrims and tourists.



# NEW MOBILITY, NEW FREEDOMS

## A Team Builds Wheelchairs for the Dominican Republic

BY SHARYN BRANSON

In 2022, a longtime friend of mine, Jamie, shared that he and a few friends who work for a wheelchair manufacturing company had visited Haiti a couple of times and wanted to visit our ministry, House Upon the Rock (Casa Sobre la Roca), in the Dominican Republic next. These men use their skills and resources to provide wheelchairs for people in need. One of the men fabricates the wheelchairs, another delivers them and fits people into their new chairs, and another works in marketing.

When someone in the United States gets a new wheelchair, the person usually does not want to keep the old chair. These men—Jamie, James, and Marat—accept donated, used chairs and then rebuild them to fit the specific needs of another person.

As we prepared for the team's trip, we promoted and organized appointments for 15 people, during which the team would evaluate them to see if they could build them wheelchairs. Yet we did not know what the local people's response would be.

In January 2023, Jamie and the team came to House Upon the Rock for the first time. They were a team of seven, including the three men, two wives, a son, and a sister. One thing they made clear was that their schedule needed to build in time for witnessing to every person and family that would come for an evaluation. This was easy to fulfill as it is our main purpose in everything we do, every day.

Before they build and fit the wheelchairs, James and Jamie take time to get to know each person. They greet everyone as if they already know him or her. They sit and talk with each one. Both men have a way about them that makes it easy to talk to them.

We were not sure how everything would work. Our environment was different than what James and Jamie were accustomed to. However, God knew everything. He had everything planned and under control.

After completing the evaluations, the team returned home to collect more donated chairs and then started the process of custom building each new chair. Every person waiting for a wheelchair had a story: Two had suffered gunshot wounds. One had endured a motorbike accident that left one leg 12 inches shorter than the other. Some were born with cerebral palsy or other birth defects, such as spina bifida. Recently, Jamie, James, and Marat returned to distribute these custom chairs. Here are some stories of people who received one:



## VANESA: a new view of the world

Vanesa, 22 years old, was born with cerebral palsy. She had been in her bed 24/7 for more than two years because she had grown too big for her mom to move and because her family does not have the means to buy a chair. They had actually given up on ever getting a chair because Vanesa's body no longer bends—she can no longer assume even a partial sitting position. Her body only allows her to lie down. Her mom had decorated her room with bright colors and flowers, but still, Vanesa spent all day lying on her stomach in her bed, looking at the same walls, day in and day out.

Vanesa's mom was reluctant to go through everything it would take to bring her daughter for evaluation: moving Vanesa out of her bed and into a car, where she had to remain lying down. Plus, Vanesa's mom could not envision anything on wheels that her daughter could fit into.

James and Jamie evaluated Vanesa and believed there *was* something they could do for her. Once back in the States, they brainstormed how to build a chair that would give Vanesa mobility yet keep her lying down.

When the team returned, we were amazed by what James and Jamie had built. They had taken the backs from three other chairs and built a new chair that accommodates Vanesa's needs. The chair is the perfect length for her body: neither her feet nor head hangs over the ends.

The team settled Vanesa into her chair, and for the first time in years, she was looking up at the outside world. It was an amazing thing to witness. Vanesa's face lit up as she looked around. I turned to her mom to see what she thought, and she had a tear running down her cheek. She hugged me and said that she never thought her daughter would leave her bed and bedroom again. Now, she can move Vanesa outside, where they sit together on the porch, visiting with family and neighbors, looking at the flowers, and participating in the world around them.

## PEDRO: renewed independence

Pedro, 62 years old, was shot in the back 32 years ago and has been paralyzed ever since. He modified his vehicle to have hand controls so he can drive. When Pedro came for his evaluation and the team asked why he wanted a new chair, he explained that his current wheelchair was very old and caused skin ulcers and constant pains. It was also too heavy (weighing more than 40 pounds) for him to lift into his car and too wide to maneuver inside his home.

Pedro values his independence. With his old chair, he could get himself into his car but then had to ask for help to get his chair in after him. In his own home, he needed assistance to go to the washroom just because his chair was too wide to fit through a normal doorway.

When the team returned, Pedro got a new 16-pound, 24-inch-wide chair. He asked many questions, learning how to pop the wheels off, fold the chair, and lift it himself. He

wheeled over to the bathroom to see if the chair would fit through the doorway, and it did.

When Pedro left after receiving his new chair, he got into his car, popped the wheels off the chair, put them on the passenger seat, folded the chair, and easily lifted it across his body and onto the passenger seat—no assistance needed. Pedro was audibly thanking God for the new level of independence his chair provides him.

**Opposite page (from top, L–R):** Custom-built wheelchairs await their new owners; James, Marat, and Jamie celebrate with Cristofer; Thanks to his new wheelchair, Cristofer can now leave his house, and he loves sitting outside with his dad; Jamie and James adjust Albert's new wheelchair; A chair for five-year-old Isaías means comfort for him and peace of mind for his parents; James and Jamie evaluate a boy who will receive a wheelchair in November 2023. **This page (from top):** Vanesa can now enjoy the scenery around her; Her chair arrives from the airport—flown in from the US; Pedro's new chair provides him with greater independence.





## LUIS MIGUEL: newfound stability

Luis Miguel, 26 years old, was born with severe deformities in both legs, making it impossible for him to walk. Luis Miguel loves chickens and raises them for a living. He takes care of his chickens himself, feeding them, cleaning their area, treating them if they become sick, and collecting their eggs.

The wheelchair he had been using was unstable. Almost daily, the wheels would hit a tiny pebble, and the whole chair would flip over. This problem made it very hard for him to independently care for his chickens. When Luis Miguel was evaluated, his leading request was for a chair with better wheels so he can get in and around to feed and care for his chickens.

Luis Miguel's new chair is lighter and smaller, it fits his body perfectly, and it has heavy-duty wheels. The wheels plus extra tip guards prevent the chair from flipping over whenever it bumps into a pebble. Luis Miguel can now care for his chickens without assistance.



## CRISTIAN: physical changes and spiritual growth

We have known Cristian his entire life. He was born prematurely at one-and-a-half pounds, and then, after three weeks, he developed a life-threatening infection. Doctors sent Cristian home, telling his mom, Liliana, that he would not survive more than a day or two.

On December 25, the day after Cristian went home, his Aunt Juli came to our door begging for help. We went and prayed with the family but did not know what else to do. Cristian was so small, so sick, and dying.

With a miracle from God and then the help of a neonatal specialist, a friend of ours from the States, Cristian was nursed back to life.

Cristian is now 19 years old. He is nonverbal and has never been able to walk, but he does have mobility in his arms and hands. Cristian is good at remembering faces and people and loves to give hugs to all when they visit. He is taller and heavier than his

mom, who is about five feet tall and weighs 90 pounds, so he is far too big for Liliana to continue carrying him everywhere.

The team evaluated Cristian, spending time with Liliana and learning more about their family. A few years back, Liliana and her husband took in seven nieces and nephews. For a few years, they were raising 10 kids, including Cristian, on very little income. From the earthly viewpoint, they have little, but their hearts are huge.

This wheelchair is the first one Cristian has ever had. He quickly figured out how to move himself about and was off with a huge smile. The wheelchair has improved the quality of life for his entire family: Liliana and her husband no longer have to carry Cristian everywhere. Cristian can move himself about their house and neighborhood. And his siblings can easily take him with them when they go out and about.

Having been a part of Cristian's life since he was born, I am in awe of God's miracle—not only physically but through his entire family's growth in our Lord. Aunt Juli and her husband came forward at our church, and both trusted Jesus. The seeds continue to grow in the family.



## More wheelchairs to come

This team plans to return every May and November until God closes the door. They will do evaluations on one trip and bring the wheelchairs and do more evaluations on the next trip. We are now getting calls from people in various parts of the country requesting evaluations for chairs. Please pray for the upcoming trip in November.

Many of those we help are unbelievers, but we know that through the gift of a wheelchair, plus our conversations and prayers, God has planted many seeds. We continue to pray for each family—that these seeds will grow in the heart of each person, drawing him or her closer to God. ■

**From top:** Luis Miguel now cares for his chickens independently; Cristian operates his new chair; The team joins Paul and Sharyn (left) and their daughter, Samantha (right).



*Sharyn and Paul Branson are commended from Saanichton Bible Fellowship in Saanichton, British Columbia.*

# Ask a Missionary?

Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

## QUESTION: As a frequent traveler, what are some of your top travel tips?

### BRAZIL

Jeanne Lipsi



Travel light and wear comfortable shoes. Take a sweater, even during the heat of summer—domestic flights don't always give out blankets, and air conditioning can be strong. Take something to read, and don't forget the tracts you might use if you start a conversation with someone beside you.

### PERU

Joel Clark



One of my main problems is always forgetting something. So days or a week before my trip, I choose a place where I start putting things I know I'll use or take on my trip.

### CROSS-CULTURAL MIN.

Bard Pillette



I used to take the cheapest flights, but now, I often take a somewhat more expensive flight with few stopovers to avoid losing luggage or missing the next flight. I also do this to avoid longer travel time, which can cause me to be exhausted or sick upon arrival in the country where I will be ministering. I always take things like roasted almonds and protein bars to avoid spending money in airports or eating in questionable places. And, finally, I always keep essential toiletries with me in case my luggage is delayed.

### TANZANIA

Gina Johnson



Book your tickets well in advance, if you can. Bring an empty backpack or lightly filled carry-on so you have room for all the "extras" that international airlines like to give children.

### ZAMBIA

Jeff & Mary June Speichinger



Be rested (get good sleep). Be alert (know where you are going). Be prepared (ensure all documents are what they should be). That list could go on for a while! Be in the Lord—which is really the first tip.

### ZAMBIA

Ruth Tucker Musumali



If you are prone to nausea when traveling, as I am, eating minimally before traveling and having something with ginger or mint in it to keep in your mouth, like gum or hard candy, helps a lot. Also, I travel with my own roll of toilet paper and hand sanitizer because most bathroom stops here do not have running water. Lastly, I always travel with backup jugs of drinking water.

### ECUADOR

Daniel Rogers



Use an app like Triplt to keep all your reservations, contact information, and flights in one easy-to-find place.

**ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!** Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](https://cmml.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!



# IBCM8

## Enabling Collaboration and Engaging the Next Generation

BY JOEL HERNANDEZ

Every four years, believers worldwide meet at the International Brethren Conference on Mission (IBCM) for spiritual reflection, fellowship, and networking and to glimpse what God is doing in the world. I first attended IBCM in 2007. At the prompting of my mentor, Ken Fleming, we traveled to Wiedenest Bible School in Germany, where IBCM4 was held. The experience was deeply moving. I left the event with several conclusions: First, IBCM enlarged my perspective of God's worldwide work. Second, young people needed to experience it. So I decided to bring teams to future conferences.

### A time to learn and connect

IBCM8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this past June. More than 1,200 believers came together from 104 countries, breaking all previous records. Many missionaries attended. You might recognize about 30 of them listed in the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* and many others whose ministries have become known in the US. Speakers Ramez Atallah and Nate Bramsen (both MPH Day 25) ministered to all. They wove their messages into the theme "For Christ's Love Compels Us" to deliver stirring keynotes, "encouraging us to believe that anything is possible with God [and] that God wants to redeem, reconcile, and transform this broken world with His love, bringing beauty from ashes."

Also in attendance were representatives of missionary service organizations (MSOs). MSC Canada, Echoes International (UK), Australians in Mission Together, and Global Connections in Mission (New Zealand) serve assemblies in their respective countries, just as CMML serves US assemblies. Lesser known is a growing body of MSOs in the Majority World. Some have emerged recently; others have a long trajectory. All of them attest that the Lord is calling believers from their countries to take the Gospel abroad. At IBCM8, MSOs had the opportunity to meet and discuss current trends, challenges, and issues that require collaboration, such as responding to global crises.

### An emphasis on young people

Remarkably, more than 20 percent of attendees were younger than 35. This notable proportion was not an accident. It resulted from a conversation among the few young people who attended IBCM7 in Rome. "How do we encourage more youth

to experience IBCM?" we asked them in an impromptu forum. The answer took shape over the following years and came to include three things: youth representatives from every country, youth-focused elements in the IBCM program, and international short-term mission trips—teams that would meet at the conference and go out from there.

That final element caught the attention of CMML.

### Scholarships and mission trips

CMML's appreciation for short-term missions is on the rise. When missionaries tell how the Lord led them to the field, the theme of mission trips recurs. Many missionaries participated in a short-term mission trip that deeply shaped their sense of God's call. Missions exposure is critical in the process of forging a missionary. So how do we encourage more young people to connect with these opportunities?

Some MSOs have developed short-term missions programs. Echoes International, for example, encourages young people to devote their gap year to receiving training and serving in short-term missions through their FirstServe program. Other MSOs support schools and training institutes that provide short-term missions opportunities. For several years now, CMML has provided training and some services to students from Emmaus Bible College during their cross-cultural missions internship. But might we do more?

With the news that IBCM was organizing post-conference short-term mission trips, CMML got on board and offered a 50 percent scholarship to young people eager to attend the IBCM conference and participate in a post-conference trip. Though the scholarship amount was generous, it was far from a free ride. Young people still had to finance their own airfare plus half of the conference and short-term mission trip fees. So those applying had to have skin in the game. We praise God for 15 enthusiastic young adults from the US, passionate about missions, who received the scholarship and took part in these events.

At IBCM8, 1,000 believers joined in prayer for 10 international short-term mission teams that went out from the conference. Each of the teams had a clear structure, destination, and mission. They went into Malaysia's capital and interior, neighboring Cambodia, and more distant Pakistan and the Philippines. Some teams participated in church-planting efforts. Others taught





**Top (L-R):** Malaysian believers volunteer at the conference's help desk; More than 1,200 believers gathered at IBCM8. **Middle (L-R):** Juanes Pineda (MPH Day 21) helps attendees use the conference app; Jim Armstrong, general director of Echoes International, convenes a meeting for the missionary service organizations; These IBCM Youth Ambassadors helped spread the word about the conference. **Bottom (L-R):** A mission team receives a traditional, warm welcome in Sarawak, Malaysia; Another team teaches English at Sangkhim Canaan School in Cambodia.

English at local schools, participated in training at camps and conferences, or evangelized among unreached people groups. Preliminary feedback from the participants about their trips is positive. We have enjoyed hearing the 15 Americans' stories, and more importantly, we look forward to seeing how the Lord leads each of them in their next steps.

### God's community working together

God is still at work in the world. His church may be declining in some places, but in others, remarkable progress is happening. Increasingly, Brethren missionaries from around

the globe are awakening to the reality of their larger community and are exploring opportunities for collaboration and engaging the next generation. We praise the Lord that IBCM8 contributed to these efforts. We pray that the Lord will continue to guide CMML and the organizations that play a vital part in this process. ■

*Joel Hernandez, CMML vice president, communication, and IBCM Network board of trustees.*

<sup>1</sup> International Brethren Conference on Mission (IBCM), "IBCM8 Conference Report," 7 July 2023, IBCM.net.