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Newsletter: 11

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Hello! This month, I wanted to share some specific examples of how I've seen God working through my ministries. I haven't shared much of this before, and often, I don't even see it myself: one morning, I asked God if I was making a difference in being here, and in response to my prayer, from that afternoon on, He gave me glimpses of what was going on around me.

One little girl comes to 5-7 year olds' English class. The first week, she cried because she didn't want to stay. Then she cried because she didn't want to leave. The following week, she saw me walk past her mum's shop and came running up to me to give me a hug. Her mum told me how much she loves English class. Another boy comes to the same class. He loves it, even though it took him many weeks to master 'fine, thank you' and not just 'thank you' to the question 'how are you?'. Now he waves at me every time I walk past his mum's restaurant where he is often playing.

One day I was waiting for the bus in a part of town where I don't know anyone, and oddly, I heard someone shout my name. It was a church member, who was a bit the worse for wear. On the bus journey, he talked away to me about church and faith, and even though I felt out of my depth, I was happy to be able to listen and encourage him to stay on the straight path.

Pastora Fabiola was talking to the man who lends us his patio for our children's club in Ongota, and that he told her how I'd chatted to him and encouraged him. I have no idea what I said, although I remember having the conversation (he gave me a chimoya fruit), but apparently, it had an impact on him.

Numbers at the Holiday Youth Club were small, which meant I had to abandon earlier plans to go to the football pitches; instead, we played a lot of UNO, Jenga and Dobble! We also went to the pool, made empanadas, and had Bible studies. During 'movie week', we watched The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. The choice of movie came about from a question I had asked them about why Jesus died. The group had no idea. I worried that I'd miscalculated, and a story about an eternal winter with mythical creatures would miss the spot here in the warm Amazon. It didn't – they loved it, and the next day, when we talked about how Aslan gave himself to pay the price of Edmund's betrayal, they understood what Jesus did for us when he died on the cross. I was delighted when they all attended the closing event on Sunday 6th August and received a Bible (pictured right).

My devotion one morning encouraged the reader to ask God for a way to show hospitality that day. Ecuadoreans are very specific about cooking, which always leaves me feeling self-conscious about preparing food for local people by myself. On top of that, coffee and tea, the pillars of Irish and



British hospitality, are not commonly consumed here either. But that afternoon, someone needed a place to stay for two hours in between meetings. It was the opportunity I had prayed for. I offered her my living room, and even better, turned out, she is one of the few people around who likes coffee!

We have begun partnering with another Christian organization in the area, and recently enjoyed 3 days of activities with a Methodist team who asked if there were any Methodist Churches in the area (pictured right). It was lovely for Fabiola and me to enjoy not having to organize anything that week (although I think I came away from it more tired than usual!) and allow the team to do their thing. That week, we also saw another of God's miracles: it's often hard to calculate exactly how many people will turn up. On each occasion, the person serving the snack would have an anxious look due to the queue compared to number of bread rolls or empanadas left in the box. Yet, every time, we had exactly the right amount, down to the very last person, with not a crumb to spare.



4 ladies with Methodist roots from 4 continents: Grace Luna (Philippines, Asia)
Dr. Kimberly Reisman (USA), Me (NI, Europe)
Sara Flores (Bolivia, South America)

Eight of us headed to a 4-day conference, combining various Wesleyan denominations, including the Methodist Church, the Church of the Nazarene, as well as the Bible Society of Ecuador. I know many of the pastors and church leaders will have learnt a lot, as unfortunately theological training is a great need in Latin America. We were blessed to have some speakers from World Methodist Evangelism, based in USA, but a worldwide organization who aims to connect Christians with Wesleyan roots and empower them to share the Gospel. All that being said – the hours were very long – breakfast was at 7am and the conference began each morning at 8am and lasted until the evening!

And finally! Despite the blessings of the work, and being able to see fruit, it was important to take some time off too. Another change for me, as previously, my holiday times were dictated by the school calendar, now I have to make a conscious effort to organize time off. With so much going on, it can be tempting to think you can't miss anything, but we must always remember that God is still working, and doesn't need us to fulfil his work – it's ok to rest!

Prayer points

- The new season of activities (Shiripuno (Tuesdays), English classes (Wed, Thurs and Fri), Ongota (Saturdays), church, youth, Bible studies
- Special upcoming events – youth barbecue (9th Sept), Ladies' retreat (Oct)
- Church plant in Ongota, and continued search for suitable land to buy
- The youth meeting restarting on Saturdays and all the young people

Wishing you God's richest blessing, Melissa