



February 2023
Newsletter: 8

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What a whirlwind since my last newsletter! Christmas and New Year came; I was invited to Christmas Eve dinner on the evening of 23rd December, 24 hours' notice! (a typical experience of Ecuadorian culture). Nevertheless, I was very grateful for the invite, and to spend Christmas with a family from the church who I have gotten to know well over the year. In January I bid farewell to Santo Domingo after a year there, travelled over the Andes, and down to the edge of the jungle to my new home: I'm now based in the Methodist Church in the small town of Misahuallí, but with the same focus I had in Santo Domingo – teaching English classes and developing discipleship.

Arriving in Misahuallí

When the famous missionary Elisabeth Elliot left Santo Domingo for Tena, the nearest large town to Misahuallí, she took a MAF plane. Sadly, I had to stick out a 7-hour drive. That being said, when she was in Santo Domingo, it was a 10-hour drive just to get to Quito, whereas nowadays, it is 2.5-3 hours.



Matching the famous letters of Misahuallí

Misahuallí sits on the edge of the Amazon rainforest by the River Napo (often referred to as the last town before the Amazon). While most of the rainforest is in Brazil and other countries, there is a section in Ecuador. It's a very big change from the much larger town of Santo Domingo – it's hot and humid, and rains a lot. Due to its location, it's actually quite a touristy little town, so it's fairly common to see foreigners wandering through the town square. It's also famous for its local wildlife – there is a colony of monkeys who live in the village, and who terrorize locals and amuse tourists in equal measure (primarily because they steal things, especially food).

A New Work _The church is much smaller than in Santo Domingo, however, there is a lot of work to do. I am working with Pastor Fabiola, and until now, besides from a small number of volunteers, Fabiola and her husband Pablo have been carrying out much of the work by themselves. Pablo runs his own business, and Fabiola is pretty much flat out, so I really hope I can be a support and blessing to them, and especially a companion in the work and service of God, and the church here.

On my first Sunday, I gave my testimony and the story of my calling to serve in another country. That week, we arranged and advertised the English classes, and these have been running for the past month. I've also been helping out at the kids' and youth meetings – the youth meeting is in Misahuallí, and, one of the kids' meetings is around a 15 minute drive away, and the other is around 45-60 minutes away. I'll be continuing to help with these clubs while getting to know the area and the work, and this will hopefully become more of a discipleship-developing role in the coming months, particularly after I return from furlough in May. The youth work in particular needs a lot of investment.



Boats on the River Napo



Music

I was also quickly incorporated into the worship group in the Sunday service, and it turns out, the clarinet (which I play) and Andean windpipes (played by Pablo) work very well together, at least once we've figured out how to connect European style with traditional Andean styles and rhythms. I also play piano (right) and we also have Maria who sings, and Fabian on drums.



Thank you I passed the one-year mark of being in Ecuador at the start of February. It's been a crazy year of new experiences from the moment I landed in Ecuador. I feel like I say this frequently, but I'm so grateful and thankful for everyone who prays for me, and who gets in contact or has supported me in any way no matter how small – it means so much that you think of me, especially from so far away.

Prayer points

Ministry

- New English classes and opportunities for outreach in this area
- Listening to God's voice and God's direction
- For revival of the youth ministry in the area after a long period of absence

Ecuador

- Practice evacuations and preparations by authorities and experts for possible natural disasters, especially in the monitoring of Cotopaxi volcano, and all who live in its shadow, including Methodist churches and a Methodist school

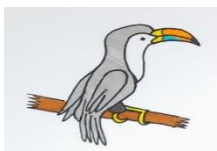
Personal

- For general good health and stamina, working in a hot and humid climate
- For my furlough in April – that it would be restful and refreshing, and for travel to and from UK, and during furlough

*Wishing you God's richest blessing,
Melissa*



Visiting families in rural communities

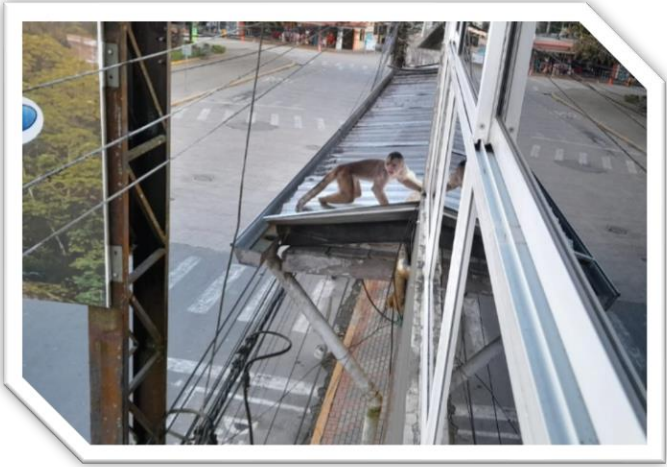




Adult English classes



Traditional housewarming and blessing in my new flat



New 'neighbours'



First Sunday in church



Kids' club in a rural community