

# *buzz*

March 22, 2015

## Letter from the Ross Richers

Warm greetings from Tena, Ecuador! I think most of you know that Tena, the capital of Napo Province, is a city in the Amazon rainforest. Some of you may know that it is internationally famous for being a popular launching point for jungle, kayaking and rafting tours. What many of the tourists who visit don't know is that here in Tena a North American Mennonite family, comprised of a mom and dad and four children, are living in a Kichwa neighborhood seven kilometers from downtown on the banks of the Colonso River. Here in Atacapi we're on a two-way mission, aiming to accompany indigenous neighbors as they discover God's presence in their lives. The people we have met have already offered us unique images of God which we hope to share with our neighbors in the North.

"Which of these three, in your opinion, was the neighbor to the traveler who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who showed compassion." Jesus replied, "Then go and do the same." "And just how am I supposed to get to know them?"

Naomi, Teresa and I started by taking a ball and some drawing material and sitting down by the river. Eventually some children gathered and amidst giggles and stares neighbors became acquainted. After several days of the same routine an adult appeared, introduced himself as the president of the Community and invited us to teach art at the neighborhood school. The Atacapi School aims to provide bilingual Kichwa and Spanish education to children ages 3-12. Each morning the teachers prepare a delicious porridge of avena (oats) with lots of milk provided by the government. The children are served refrigerio around 10 a.m. each day and it's during this time that we join them. Jordan usually gets drawn into a lively game of soccer (if he brings a ball) and Teresa and Naomi play variations on games of tag and ring-around-the-rosy with the younger girls. In addition to games of speed I often bring coloring supplies and/or Bible story cards which older children enjoy reading aloud to each other while younger kids asks questions about the pictures.



After a big cup of porridge, and a chance to play and relax, the school bell rings and classes resume. The children in Atacapi, especially those who live on the edges of the village, are super early risers. They are used to getting up very early to walk to school, some as far as four or five kilometers, to arrive at school by 7 a.m. So by 10 a.m. they are good and hungry and the youngest ones are quite sleepy after the break. Naomi, Teresa and Jordan teach English songs and phrases to the 3- and 4-year-olds in an attempt to keep them awake while their teachers get a well-deserved break. I rotate between other classes teaching English with an artistic flair, i.e, attempting to draw pictures that half resemble the English vocabulary words. I am learning to be flexible! All of the teachers are native Kichwa speakers and prefer to converse together in their native language. So the kids and occasionally the teachers translate for us so we're not completely left out.

The younger children are let out at noon and the older ones at 12:30 or 1:00, depending on whether they finish their work. The children sing a goodbye song in Kichwa, then trek off home for lunch, but not before they take a dip in the river to cool down from the blazing noon day heat.



—we all swim in our clothes. We quickly walk up the hill together and say goodbye. As we enter the gate to our house, Soraida, Paola and their younger siblings and cousins' head up the trail to the house behind ours. It's been a good morning with our neighbors.

Thank you for your support and prayers! Con mucho amor...

—Jane Ross Richer

It is past 1 p.m. Soraida and Paola's older brother comes to fetch them from the river: they're late again and their school uniforms are sopping wet



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The *Waterford Buzz* is normally published weekly for members of Waterford Mennonite Church. Items for inclusion should be given to the editor by 5 p.m. Tuesday preceding publication.

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## Comeback of the Covering

I walked into church last Sunday and was pleasantly surprised to see coverings in the sanctuary again. Symbols are wonderful. They remind us visually what we strive to value inwardly. I would like to thank Carol Shetler and the crew who helped to bring coverings back into our sanctuary. They will provide many additional opportunities for us to worship God through the familiar and in new worship expressions.

If you are still confused as to what I am talking about, just take a look at the blue hymnals. Over 120 of these books have been repaired and placed in new “coverings”. Published 23 years ago, these books are ready for a new future as they complement our Bible in worship.

—JD Smucker

Additionally, a large thank you to all those who were involved with putting the coverings on the hymnals: Tim and Sharon Burkholder, Len and Loanne Harms, Dwight and Carolyn Kauffman, Sandy Kauffman, Jan Oostland, Phil and Rebecca Ramer, Gary and Carol Shetler, Ron Weirich, and Byron Yoder.

## Thank You

With Emery's recent visit to the hospital and now Healthcare at Greencroft, we want to thank the Waterford Church and Sojourners class for the flowers and the caring cards. Thank you also for the cards, thoughts and prayers after Emery's brother and Mary's sister died. We are so blessed with the many visits and Velma's cheery face. God is good.

—Emery & Mary Holsopple

## Stephen Ministry Training Continues

This coming week the Stephen Ministry training class members will be considering their role when dealing with a care receiver who has depression. During this session they will be looking into the very common problem of depression—its causes and symptoms, and the very special role Stephen Ministers have in the lives of people who are depressed.



*Palm Sunday =  
Coat Sunday*

## Hosts Needed for Mennonite High School Choir Festival

Waterford Mennonite Church is known for its great hospitality. We have a chance to show that hospitality again on Friday, April 10 through Monday, April 12 as we host the Eastern Mennonite High School choir members, who will be in Goshen for the Mennonite Schools Council Choir Festival (performance on April 12 at Sauder Hall). We have the chance to host these 44 high school students in our homes; others will be able to donate prepared food or store-bought items for their Sunday noon meal on April 12. The choir will share music with us in both services that day.

The overnight stays are for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, April 10-12. Hosts will provide breakfast on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday mornings and will be asked to provide transportation at various times during the weekend (mornings from your home and evenings back to your home).

Finally, hosts will be asked to pack lunches for their students' bus ride to Illinois on Monday and to bring their students to Waterford on Monday morning by 8 a.m. to meet their bus. (Students can be dropped off earlier if necessary at the church on Monday to accommodate hosts' work schedules. Please let us know if this is the case.)

Carol Shetler will be coordinating our church's hosting of these students. If you are able to help out with the lodging, please contact her at: shetlergary@gmail.com.

We welcome many others of you who are not hosting to help provide food for the Sunday noon meal for the choir members at our church on April 12. A list of what is needed will be at the table near the library on Sunday, March 22, and you can sign up there. If you miss visiting the table on Sunday morning, please be in contact with Carol Shetler soon so that we will be prepared for this special time that celebrates and affirms the involvement of Mennonite teens in choral music.

## Address Changes

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