



Dear Friends,

The six months we were in the United States have come and gone quickly. Recently a friend observed that our lives are moving at a rapid pace when we're on the "western time clock" – a packed schedule of work, visits with friends and family, connections with churches and extracurricular activities. As things slow down to a much more manageable pace here in Ecuador and our lives are no longer dictated by schedules, it takes some time to adjust.



However, we are invigorated by the change and have reconnected quickly with friends in Zábalo over Christmas and New Year's. It is a blessing to have both connections in the United States and here in the South. We are experiencing God's blessing as we learn, live, love, and relate to those around us wherever we are.

Rainy days are the perfect time to visit with neighbors. During our first month here, we have been especially blessed by several long visits during extraordinary rain storms with our neighbor, friend and lay pastor Iter Yiyoguaje and his wife Irene. It has become very clear that we hold in common a desire to know and experience God and each other in deeper ways, and God has been faithful in providing special times together to do just that.

Our home continues to be a place where children and youth congregate to share food, swing in hammocks, talk, laugh and exchange new words in Cofán and English. Evangelization by presence, lifestyle and loving relationship, witnessed in the first chapter of John's Gospel (1:35-51), is our guiding example as we attempt to "Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words."

In the New Testament, and particularly in Jesus, the most common image for what God is offering us is a banquet, a participative and joyous party, now. We enjoyed two heavenly potluck feasts at Christmas and New Year's Eve. Both were wonderfully simple, focused on community, friendship and fellowship, and had an amazing banquet of food like we've never tasted before. We ate turtle, caiman, tapir, an uncountable variety of fish, monkey and more.

Each Sunday in the Zábalo Church we are encouraged by the presence of community members from many different families, including women, men and children. We can see that Iter's faithfulness in opening the church doors for worship and praise each Sunday morning is meeting a need for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation in Zábalo.



Jerrell was invited to preach at the community service on Christmas day, and Jane was invited to speak on our last Sunday in the village several weeks ago. More recently, Jane and Jerrell were invited to preach, present, pray and read scripture in several services at Quito Mennonite Church. The congregation just celebrated the move to their new property in Ecuador's capitol on Saturday.

We ask for your prayers for:

- The youth and children we spend time with each day – that they may experience God as inviting and accepting
- Our family, as we joyfully and trustfully continue to live and work in a Cofán community
- Iter, for continued strength, love and determination as he chooses each day to follow Jesus
- Safe travels and meaningful encounters at the Cofán Youth Retreat we are planning for February 10-15 in the mountains outside Quito

Prayers of praise and lament:

- Iter, Irene, and their children – a strong and faithful presence in the church and community of Zábalo
- Iter and Irene's ninth child, Romi, whose body had not developed in pace with his heart, mind and soul, died on October 14. Iter and Irene continue to have dreams of their son, a very sure sign to them of God's continued presence in the wellbeing of Romi
- A positive response from the community to Iter's wish to repair and repaint the church sanctuary and the new faces we see there as we gather for worship

May you experience the healing and forgiving power of God, the solidarity of Jesus, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit,

Jerrell, Jane, Sierra, Naomi, Teresa and Jordan