



**Dear Friends,**

In our last letter we asked for prayers for guidance as our family discerned our next steps. God has been faithful to show us the way we should walk.

First off, we are grateful for the folks who participated in the Learning and Fellowship tour we led in March. We trust that they will continue to be drawn to “follow God’s path” as they reflect on the new insights and connections made during our time together in Ecuador.



After the group returned to the US, we made our way back down to Zábalo in time for Easter. Easter morning in Zábalo followed an all-night celebration of the *chonta* palm. Many children spent Sunday at our house while their parents and older siblings recovered from the festivities. We were able to experience resurrection in new ways, as God used our home as a sanctuary for children like the ten-year-old girl who slept all day in our hammock.

After reaffirming our commitment to accompany folks and not spend time trying to erect attractive-looking programs, we settled into some time of patient waiting. One morning two women came to our home asking for medicine and prayers for their grandfather, Mauricio, who had fallen and split his head in the night. We prayed and read the Bible together, cleaned Mauricio’s wound and gave him some ibuprofen. This cleared a way for more opportunities to visit with him and his family in the days that followed. What a gift it was for us to be with Mauricio and hear the stories of joy and pain from his life.



In early April the community held a party to celebrate the *Charapa* restoration project. Each family received a payment for the turtle eggs they protected and hatched this year. The children at our home congregation, Waterford Mennonite, raised funds through last summer's Vacation Bible School to help pay the families of Zábalo for their efforts to bring back the turtles. Leah Amstutz (pictured at left) and other members of the learning tour had the privilege of releasing some of these *charapas* into the wild.

This year a group of Waterford youth is preparing for baptism by reading Michele Hershberger's *God's Story, Our Story*. Pastor Katie Misz gave copies to Teresa and Naomi before we left Goshen. As we read chapters together as a family we were inspired to share it with folks at the church in Zábalo. Jane has been doing the translation, and so far, we have had two opportunities to share the material. The first chapter speaks about the way sin not only saddens God, but breaks relationships with God, family, self, others and creation – a new concept for the church leader, Iter, and the youth we are accompanying.

We're also relieved that Iter and his brother, Rodrigo, were able to fell the handful of large trees growing near our house. It was nerve-wracking to watch and hear the trees hit the ground, but we can now sleep more peacefully through the storms!

#### **We appreciate your prayers for:**

- The leaders of FEINE as they work to found a new university to train the next generation of indigenous youth. Pictured is a group of educators who met recently (from left: Shuar Pastor Clever Machiant, Kichwa leader Patricio Santi and his son, Kichwa leader Margarita de la Torre, Chilean pastor Victor Rey and Mennonite Mission Network representatives Jerrell Ross Richer and Peter Wiggington).
- Peaceful resolution to the conflict between the leaders of Sinangoe including Pastor Ramon and the mestizo gold miners who are illegally encroaching on Cofán lands. [Visit <https://www.amazonfrontlines.org/videos/> and click on "Sinangoe" for a recent video]
- A safe and meaningful time with the group of thirty Goshen College students arriving next week for a three-week course entitled Ecological Economics in Ecuador. May our presence be a blessing to the people we encounter along the way.
- That our family will receive a positive response to our application for a permanent visa.



**May you know Christ's peace -- Jane, Jerrell, Sierra, Naomi, Teresa and Jordan Ross Richer**