



Tena, Ecuador -- May 3, 2019

We greet you once again from our home across the Colonso River. We are happy to be back at our communication base after sleeping in six different sets of beds over the past few weeks!

We were encouraged during a visit to Zábalo by members of the Learning and Fellowship Tour, organized by the Central Plains Conference of the Mennonite Church. On our final evening together, we worshiped and prayed with students at the Ninawachi Mission Institute.



After the group's departure, we connected with friends and colleagues, new and old, in the capitol city of Quito. We worshipped at Quito Mennonite Church and spent time with staff from the Cofán Survival Foundation.

Our spirits were rekindled by a visit to a mission house on the Pacific coast, where we met long-time missionary



Daniel Rogers and many others during Holy Week. Afterwards, we traveled to the Yachana Foundation to research the possibility of Cofán youth receiving practical skills training. And we returned home to find a new bridge across the Colonso River.

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?

Luke 15:4 (NLT)

This past month was like no other we have had as missionaries. Inspired by this story, we have focused our energy and resources on caring for one lost sheep. In the parable, Jesus suggests that the one sheep who wandered away from the flock because he couldn't hear the shepherd's voice is as important to the Good Shepherd as the other ninety-nine.

The sheep in our particular story wandered away from Zábalo seven months ago. This fourteen-year-old boy was like a sheep without a shepherd. Last month, a day before we left the village, his aging father passed away and we believe the Good Shepherd brought the boy to our home. We felt called to minister to him, knowing that if we did not someone else might, and that someone may be a wolf!

We have had a wonderful month together, talking and eating and laughing at the same table as Jesus, whose presence we sense in this Cofán youth. We are rubbing shoulders with Him! As Christ, through this beloved child, is teaching us, we are also loving and affirming him. Together we are experiencing the kingdom of God, here and now.

The ninety-nine sheep may be whispering in hushed voices about the company we are keeping. How could these missionaries invite the likes of him into their home? Don't they know better? Meanwhile, the ninety-nine feel protected and secure within the flock.

But the Good Shepherd doesn't always ask us to stay with the obedient ones. He himself runs after the one sheep who, for whatever reason, is not obeying the shepherd's voice. And when He finds the sheep, He puts him on his shoulders and carries him home.

Please pray that the power of God's love will win and console the lonely heart of our lost sheep, restoring that which is broken.

Pray also for a safe place for him to live and study when we return to the States at the end of June.

In Christ,

Jane, Jerrell, Naomi, Teresa and
Jordan Ross Richer

