



Paraguay 2017

TEAM REPORT

Kean Hyltoft | Observations | August 11, 2017

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8

On Friday July 28, 2017, our missions team arrived at Silvio Petirossi Airport in Asuncion Paraguay. The team consisted of 12 team members, five members from North Carolina and seven members from Northern Virginia. In Paraguay, the combined team was headed up by Jimmie Mitchel and Tommy Barton. All team members were placed in private homes of church members from El Renuevo. A General Orientation Meeting took place after a hearty breakfast at El Renuevo. The team members were informed about their upcoming work assignments. A number of members would perform physical labor at the new purchased lot at Marin while another group would conduct Vacation Bible School. After a great lunch at Comida de Mama, the team members headed out to the construction site for a brief orientation meeting followed by several hours of work. It was clear to everybody from the get go that the work would be labor intense. A foundation was to be dug for the house to be used as a temporary church facility and later as the pastor's home. The team members were also asked to work on a septic tank. The scheduled work was directed by Pastor Miguel Diaz, the pastor of Barrio Parque church. Pastor Miguel has extensive experience in construction work in Paraguay.

Friday evening Pastor Armstrong conducted a well-attended marriage seminar for the Paraguayans and the American team members at El Renuevo.

On Saturday morning, team members met at 7 am for breakfast at El Renuevo followed by an orientation meeting about the upcoming planned Vacation Bible Schools. Members were given careful instructions regarding construction materials and songs for VBS. The members were then taken by bus to Marin where they were instructed by Saul, a seminary student, on how to invite the local residents to VBS later that afternoon. I happened to go with Saul, Joy, Quinten and Dr. Martin Hudzinsky into the neighborhood. It was clear that Saul personally knew many of the residents at Marin. Saul has a heart for people and easily connects with them, especially the young ones. As we walked throughout the area, he gave us an inside and personal description of the lives of many of the individuals.



As we walked through Marin it was clear to see—based on my past visits—that this area is growing. New modular homes have been built by the government which house members of the local police force and their families. A number of civilian families have also been selected to occupy these homes. There is clear improvement to the Marin community. The team returned to Marin in the afternoon to conduct a VBS. The ongoing theme this year for all the VBS' was the parable of the sower. It is one of a small number of parables reported in all three of the synoptic Gospels. Whenever

possible these meetings would begin with physical activities and games for the children—if possible—then followed by prayers, introduction of team members, singing, Bible lessons and finally craft projects.

The team under the leadership of Jimmie and Martha Mitchel—who have conducted countless vacation bible schools during their fifteen years of missionary service to Mexico—had a great time interacting with the children and students they met during their stay.



Sunday morning worship service was led by Fredi Sosa, the new associate pastor in El Renuevo. I noticed that Sergio Junior was back with the worship team. He had been absent since his father Sergio suffered a severe stroke more than a year ago. Many people have been praying for Sergio and his family and he has experienced a remarkable recovery, but is still not able to resume full responsibility for the Marin area where he faithfully had served together with his wife for more than eight years. Saul the seminary student I previously mentioned is fulfilling that responsibility for now.



During the church service, team members were each given an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Paraguayan congregation while brother Jimmie Mitchell was asked to bring the Sunday morning message. After the service, I had the pleasure to present Sergio with a Spanish study bible on behalf of Project Paraguay and a very generous donor back in Virginia. An older lady came up to me and gave me a big hug. She tried to tell me something so I asked Martha Mitchell who stood close to me to interpret. I now recognized the lady as the mother of Teonila Ortigoza--she and her husband Ramon had opened their home to me in 2010 when I first came to Paraguay. The old lady explained that Teonila who is only in her late forties was recuperating

from a stroke she had back in the early spring. The Lord put on my heart that we had to pray for her, so it was a real blessing to me that Jimmie and Martha Mitchell together with Tommy Barton and his wife agreed to join me and we all went to the old lady's house where soon her daughter Teonila and her daughter Jessica showed up. We found out that the stroke that initially affected her memory now had dissipated. We all gathered together praying and thanking the Lord for His mercy to Teonila and we prayed for her family as well. It turned out that Teonila's mother practically lived next door to Pabla de Troche's house, so on the way back to El Renuevo, we paid them a short visit. Pabla and her two daughters Pamela, Leidi and the grandmother, Isidora, were home and I was given an opportunity to reaffirm my longstanding friendship with this wonderful family.

Later that Sunday afternoon, we were invited by the brothers and sisters in charge and the team conducted a VBS at the other outreach area, Mariano Roque Alonso. We are praying that in the future we also can provide this area with a church, but right now Marin is the main focus of our

efforts. We had a lot of fun with the children who laughed as Jimmie Mitchell provided them with great entertainment ministry. At 6 pm the with a dinner at

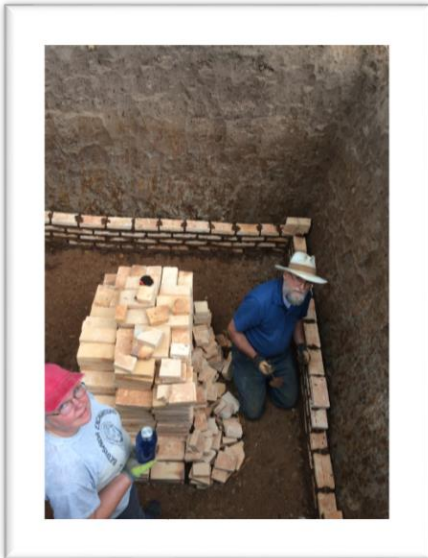
On Monday and members conducted students from the the rest of the team construction site at afternoon, a special the ladies at 5 pm at El



through his music team concluded the day Comida de Mama.

Tuesday, some team VBS at El Renuevo with Christian school while was working at the Marin. On Monday meeting was held for Renuevo. On

Wednesday, a portable toilet had been installed at the work site and all team members were involved with the construction effort. We moved a lot of dirt and stones. Trenches were dug for the foundation of the building. Pastor Miguel had brought a concrete mixer with our bus the day before and it received electric power from a home on the adjacent lot. Water was also brought in from the same owner. Bricks were brought in so a wall could be built on the inside of the septic tank. Mortar was mixed for both the septic and the rough stones placed in the foundation of the building. Wednesday was a cold and rainy day mostly with a light drizzle, so subsequently it was decided to eat lunch inside the bus. The only dry places that day were either in the bus or inside the portable toilet.



Thursday was the last day for our team. Members devoted the morning to finishing and cleaning up the worksite and later we had lunch at Comida de Mama followed by another group devotional. Martha Mitchell had prepared short devotionals and each team member had been given a small booklet. A number of volunteers led these devotionals. They were very well done and forced each participant to take a really good look at themselves and their personal relationship with the Lord. Thursday afternoon, the team went sightseeing and were also given the opportunity to buy souvenirs for friends and family back home.

On Thursday evening, there was a meeting arranged at El Renuevo so the participants and their Paraguayan brothers and sisters could say goodbye. Each team member received a gift from the Paraguayans—a token of love and appreciation

from these wonderful people that many of us feel are now part of our extended family. We were scheduled to leave 6 am Friday morning from Silvio Petrossi Airport so most participants went back early to their host families so they could get a few hours' sleep before heading to the airport.

This year the duration our mission trip was shorter, but with the heavy construction demand weighing on each member, it turned out to be just right. It is always such a great pleasure to be on a mission trip together with our brothers and sisters from First Presbyterian Church in Stanley.



This church sends frequently church members on short term mission trips. I had an opportunity to visit this church a few months back and it was plain to see how vibrant this church is.

I believe that our first priority as believers is to bring the gospel into the world as our Lord and Savior has stated. If more churches enthusiastically would be willing to send teams even locally, many stagnant and dying churches would experience revival and renewal among their congregations. Countless churches in the US have lost their

“first love” and unless this picture changes, we will soon have a number of dying churches in America.

When participating with the brothers and sisters from Stanley, I really liked their emphasis on the importance of prayers. Each member is given the opportunity to pray for an extended time while sitting on a chair intended for that purpose at the work site while the participants alternate.

As usual, I had a chance to rekindle old friendships and make new ones. I now realize that I am getting older when I look at so many of the young people that I remember before were just children, but now are grown young adults. I often wonder how their future is going to be—we are living in an increasing uncertain and lost world. If they put their faith and trust in our Lord and Savior, then they will have a bright future, but if they choose to follow the world and its temptations, they will be lost.

It was such a privilege to be part of this missions’ trip and I echo Tommy Barton when he declared this to be one of the best teams he so far had been a part of. Thanks again Jimmie, Martha, Tommy, Janice, Melissa, Bob, Joy, Martin, John, Cynthia and finally Quentin, our youngest team member whom I really enjoyed getting to know. Each of you contributed a great deal to make this such a special team. God willing, I will be back next year.

In His Joy

Kean

