

Greetings Dear Family and Love Ones!

We find great joy in writing you once again from Guatemala. Our hope and prayer is that you and your loved ones are doing well and had a great first quarter of 2015!

Our End-of-Year Travels

We are thankful to God that we were able to visit most of our supporters this year. It now requires our splitting up to get the visits accomplished. We are very thankful to those of you who have told us that coming every other year works well.

Our gratitude also goes out to each one of you for your hospitality and kind treatment you showed us while we were with you at the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015. You are the major reason our travels are so enjoyable!

To summarize our travels, allow us just to say that we visited 11 states and four different countries. The States, obviously, is where are our supporting churches are located. The other countries were: Germany, to work with the Euro-American Family Retreat; Bosnia, to visit with Snezana's family (Hawatthia was able to meet them on this occasion ☺); and Croatia, where we stopped on our way back to Germany after departing from Bosnia (we visited the beautiful Plitvice Lakes National Park).



Reporting on the work

Regarding the Euro-American Family Retreat, it took place again in Rothenberg ob der Tauber from November 22-26, 2014. The theme this year was "In Relationship with God." We were again in charge of the teen program. Jeremy Korodaj was present to help us once again. And, this year we had

Snezana's help with teaching the young ladies. We were happy to work with 14 great teenagers.



Studying God's Word



Practicing for group singing



Snezana with the teen girls

During the end-of-year holidays, we had the blessing of spending time with family and friends. For Christmas this year, we were in California. For New Year's we were in Tennessee. We missed seeing Mom Cynthia this year during this time.



With Byron's family

Ashley, Michael, Cristina, Ariel, Megan, Ariel's boyfriend, Elijah, Christopher, Angel, Aralee, Hawatthia, Snezana, and Byron



With Hawatthia's family
Antoine, Nikki, Bryson, Detrel, Gail, Hawatthia, Mark, Aaron, Diana,
Mark Jr., Chaz, Hailee, Geno, Snezana, and Byron

Trip to Bosnia & Herzegovina

As we mentioned previously, this year the three of us were able to make a visit to Bosnia. There were a couple purposes for this visit.

First, we visited with Snezana's family. Byron and Snezana were able to go in April 2014 after a lectureship in Italy. Hawatthia, however, had not been, so this afforded him the opportunity to meet Snezana's family and to see the country where she was born. We drove from Germany, which took us 14 hours! When we arrived to Banja Luka, at about 11:30 p.m., Snezana's parents Ilija and Irena were anxiously waiting for us, greeted us warmly, and made sure we had plenty to eat! Our visit with them and with other family members was a blessing. Only Snezana's mother, Irena, is a Christian in her family, so we are hoping that this will change one day.



With Snezana's family
Back row: Adriana (sister), Tara (niece), Željko (brother-in-law),
Snezana, Byron and Hawatthia; front row: Ilija and Irena (Snezana's
parents)

And second, our trip to Bosnia allowed us to follow-up on a couple of families that received financial assistance. One of the families was the Ivić family. Some of you donated funds to help this family soon after the terrible flood that affected this family and multitudes more a year ago. Because of your generosity, this family found hope when only despair awaited them. They were and still are all very thankful for the help in such a time of need.



With the Ivić family in their home
Back row: Aco, Mira, and Snezana
Front row: Anica, Ilija, Duško, Hawatthia and Byron

We also helped Milan Ljubojevic, who worked with Snezana's sister. After an accident at work, Milan began to suffer with pain and difficulty moving. He was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy but is still under testing for other neurological diseases. He is married, has two young daughters and is the sole breadwinner and only occasionally receives a low disability income. So, we decided to send him a small contribution to help with his expenses. Of course, we were anxious to see how Milan was doing. Despite his severe pain and long stay in the hospital, Milan is all smiles. He is a very positive person and was thankful to God for our help and our visit. We pray that he will get to know God better and become a true follower of Jesus as a result.



Visiting with Milan at the hospital

Some Challenges

This year, upon returning from our end-of-year travels, Byron and Snezana came home to a house full of mold. It was so bad that they did not sleep in the home for five weeks after returning, while they cleaned it and made the place livable again. The mold was in the clothes, books, furniture, shoes—it was everywhere!



They are very thankful that Hawatthia willingly provided a place for them to sleep while they went through the toil of cleaning the house. Snezana, especially, had it rough, since she did most of the cleaning while Byron was busy with ministerial responsibilities. They are also thankful to several members of the church that came several times to help with the cleaning.



The landlord made every effort to repair the house wherever it was suspected that the problem was originating, but to no avail. Because we returned during the dry season, the mold became manageable, but shortly after they repaired and



repainted several areas the mold was back again.



Jose Alfredo Garcia, Georgina Ramos and Carlos Ramos helping to clean the mold

As a result of all the trouble they had in this house, Byron and Snezana decided it was best for their health and their sanity (☺) to find another place. Thanks to God, they were able to find another place located about a seven-minute drive (depending on traffic) from ITL. This happened at the beginning of April. However, about two weeks after they moved into the new place, the landlord informed them that he wanted to sell the house! He was kind enough to give them the first opportunity to purchase it, but they felt it was not the right moment or the right price. This left them again with the uncertainty of how long they would be able to live there. With many of their things still in boxes, it took away the zeal to unpack, thinking they might need to pack again soon. However, just a today, the landlord said that he had decided to keep the house! So, it appears they may be able to finish unpacking after all. Thank God!

Anibal Ramirez & Darvin Alvarez

Our coworkers, Anibal Ramirez and Darvin Alvarez have had health problems recently, and we are asking for you to please pray for them.



Hawatthia, Darvin, Anibal, and Byron

About two months ago, Anibal was diagnosed with hepatitis A and C. The severity affected him greatly, but more so its effects on his involvement with the church and as an instructor at ITL.

Things did not look good for Anibal initially. He was told by the treating physician that we would have to be on total rest. He would not be able to go out, to teach, to visit, or even to read! The doctor was concerned that anything that would create any kind of emotion reaction in him would only make things worse. He immediately began to treat him and said it would be 1 ½ months before he would know if Anibal would respond to the treatment.

His first major blood test done just two weeks after his treatment began showed no progress! This disappointed Anibal, as you can imagine. However, the doctor said he would not see any positive results for another two weeks. When that time came and the test results were out, Anibal had made a 30% improvement! The hepatitis A was completely gone and the doctor said they would now give their full attention to combating hepatitis C! We thank God for Anibal's progress and we keep praying for him.

The doctor believes Anibal contracted hepatitis A from something he ate that was contaminated and hepatitis C from a blood transfusion he received many years ago to keep him from dying after being shot by a thief who was robbing his sister's store. Anibal just happened to stop by to see his sister when the thief who was there reacted by shooting him in the stomach. Anibal recovered and has since struggled here and there with his health because of it, but has done relatively very well until now that he has had to fight this serious health problem. Please pray for Anibal's full recovery.



With the Ramirez family when Dulce graduated from high school last October

Our other coworker, Darvin Alvarez, too, suffered some health problems recently (he is pictured below with his family). This began around two weeks ago, when he kept complaining of a serious headache and neck ache. Finally, one evening, while he was at ITL, it became obvious that his symptoms were pointing to Bell's palsy of the right side of his face. By the time he was ready to go home, his lip had begun to sag. Thankfully, Dr. Raul Duran was also at ITL during this time and checked him and prescribed treatment for him temporarily until Darvin could get to his regular doctor in Coban.



Lily, Alison, Daniel, Camilla, and Darvin

After seeing his doctor, Darvin was given treatment for his symptoms and told to rest for a week. As a result, Darvin was not able to accompany some of the new students who were from his area of Guatemala as they made their trip to ITL to begin their studies, or to be at orientation day. Thankfully, he was able to recover enough to begin teaching the following week and to make a trip to Paraguay that was scheduled several months ago, a trip to teach at the Bible school in Asuncion.

Please keep Darvin in your prayers, so that his recovery will continue to be positive, quick and complete.

Because of Anibal's sickness for the past two months and because of Darvin's illness three weeks ago, our schedule and work load became even busier than usual. So, please pray for us, too, so we can manage our time, our health, and the work well.

The Church at Linda Vista

Things at Linda Vista are doing relatively well. We are glad to report that there have been four people who have decided to become Christians this year. We will send out a separate report to give more details about each of them.

On this occasion, we would like to dedicate this space to thank the youth group at the Nichols St. Church of Christ in Bay City, Texas, for their contribution of school supplies for our children at Linda Vista.

In Guatemala, school begins in January and ends in October. This creates quite a burden in January and February for the families, as they usually have to come up with funds to register their children in school, to buy uniforms and to purchase school supplies. Therefore, the youth group's contribution was distributed to many of the children at Linda Vista during the middle of January; it was just a few days after classes began, to help alleviate some of the burden the parents faced.



Distributing the school supplies to the children at Linda Vista



Prayer Requests

As we close, we would like to offer this list of prayer requests. Please lift up these requests often before the Father of mercies and all grace.

- For Snezana's health. She has had a few health issues recently
- For the churches in San Cristobal, Coban, Las Pacayas, and for the new church plant in Santa Cruz—all in the department of Alta Verapaz
- For the spiritual and numerical growth of the Linda Vista church
- For God to continue to use us in this part of the world
- For ITL students and their families as we have just begun another school year at ITL
- And for all those previously mentioned: Anibal, Darwin, new Christians, for Milan, the Ivic family, Snezana's family, our families, and all those we are seeking to reach with the Gospel

May God grant you the peace that passes all understanding!

Serving Jesus,

Hi Jones

Byron E. Benitez

Snezana Benitez