

## Articles:

- Is Christmas about “doing” or “being”? (1)
- How we shared the gospel by accident (1-2)
- The ministry learning another language (2)
- Introducing the town of La Mesa (2)

## Prayer Concerns:

- Thank God for overall good health and pray that it continues.
- For a deeper understanding of Spanish as we work more intentionally with tutors.
- That the Conversational English classes we teach this month would be beneficial to the children and adults involved.
- That we might help young people at the school connect with God through our friendship and example.
- For a safe and enjoyable trip to Ecuador in January to visit fellow MMN workers, David and Ericka Gingerich.
- For a good start to the new school year at the end of January.

News from the Kauffman family in La Mesa, Colombia

## Christmas Greetings



Ah, the sights, sounds and smells of the Christmas season: 60 to 80 degree weather, students graduating from high school, BBQ chicken roasting on an open flame. Sounds a lot more like June in the United States, but that's how it is this time of year in La Mesa, Colombia.

Yes, people also put out lights and Christmas trees, play traditional carols, and get ready for some serious shopping. But we've been thinking this year that Christmas might not be so much about what we do, but about who God is.

Incarnation is about God being with humankind by becoming one of us. "God with us," as Matthew puts it (1:23). It would seem that God in Jesus spent quite a lot of time just "being" human.

Just "being" in Colombia has been a big part of our first few months here. Being with Pastor Martín and his family. Being at church for worship and fellowship. Being at the school with the students and faculty during the celebration.

At times we would much rather be doing, serving, or helping. We're learning,

however, that our compulsive desire to do often leads to shallow, ineffectual activity in the name of "mission work." As Evelyn Underhill put it, "Being, not wanting, having, and doing, is the essence of the spiritual life."

Mission is first and foremost an act of incarnation: being with people where they live. This year may Christmas also be first and foremost about being with God's people, celebrating the God who became one with us. Merry Christmas!



Kindergartners during Colegio Americano Menno's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary parade. Read more about the celebration at <http://www.mennonitemission.net/resources/news/story.asp?ID=828>.

## Abby's Birthday: Accidental Evangelism



Abby enjoyed the singing.

Story continued on page 2.

The big day had finally come: Abby's first birthday. It was hard to believe that only a year ago she was a helpless, red, screaming newborn. It was also hard to believe we'd be celebrating without the presence of our family and friends who had been such an important part of her first ten months.

At the suggestion of our new Colombian friends, we decided to host a small party at our house. We bought balloons and empanadas, made two cakes, and invited a few of our closest friends. Martín led us in some singing, with an especially jubilant version of "Happy Birthday." We shared the food, opened

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*Trust in the Lord with all  
your heart and lean not  
on your own  
understanding; in all  
your ways acknowledge  
him, and he will make  
your paths straight.*

*Proverbs 3:5.6*

**Our Support Team  
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Zion Mennonite Church**

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## Language Learning as Ministry

"I'm sick—I mean—I'm a nurse." That's what I said the first evening we arrived in Colombia while introducing myself in a church service. In Spanish, those two words are rather similar, and with my exhaustion I confused them.


That was the start of many faltering sentences, confused looks, understanding smiles and the ongoing struggle to be understood.

Part of "incarnation" – being with people where they live – is learning the language. Fortunately we both had studied Spanish before we arrived in Colombia. Even so, we encounter many moments where we long to fully express ourselves, rattle off a story, or be

confidently sure that we got the punch line or the sermon.

To advance our Spanish, we began studying more intentionally with language tutors in November. We've improved our language skills, but also formed close relationships with our tutors.

We believe learning Spanish is not only a means to do ministry, but a ministry in and of itself. Being vulnerable, taking risks, and valuing the culture enough to learn the language well are all part of the ministry of incarnation. We hope to continue making this ministry a high priority as we assume our "official" work in the coming year.



### In Focus: The Town of La Mesa

**Founded:** March 12, 1777  
**Population:** Approx. 33,000  
**Average Altitude:** 1,250 meters (4,104 feet)  
**Total Area:** Urban, 2.75 km<sup>2</sup> (1 mi<sup>2</sup>); Rural, 148 km<sup>2</sup> (57 mi<sup>2</sup>)  
**Average Temperature:** 22° C (72° F)  
**Geography:** Located on a mesa extending from the eastern range of the Andes Mountains (hence the name). Steep slopes on the edges of town descend into valleys on either side. On clear days snow-capped peaks are visible in the distance.  
**Economy:** Agriculture (tropical fruits, cattle and poultry), tourism, small businesses. Relatively high unemployment.  
**Religion:** Majority Catholic with at least ten Protestant churches in town.  
**People:** Warm and welcoming. Mostly of mixed ethnic ancestry (Spanish, indigenous, African). Traditionally rural though urban dwellers are attracted by the small town feel.

### Accidental Evangelism Cont'd...

presents, and watched a slide show of pictures from her first year. By 8:00 most everyone had said goodbye. But not Sandra and Yuri.

We had gotten to know these two tenth-grade girls at the school. At one point Sandra and Yuri expressed interest in Mennonite service. So we had promised to investigate some of their options. They were also very fond of Abby, hence the invitation to our party.

As we continued talking that night eventually the topic of Mennonite service came up. We searched the Internet for

mission agencies. The recurring theme was that they would need to be active members of a church, preferably Mennonite.

So we asked them about their faith. They said that they came from nominally Catholic families, but were attracted by what they had learned about Mennonites at school. It seemed only natural to invite them to church, and they accepted.

During their first encounter at church we sensed openness. To our surprise, they initiated the second visit. We pray they experience a new birth as they come to know Christ.