

Articles:

- Back to school, Colombian style (1-2)
- Ecuador teaches us we are not alone (1-2)
- La Mesa Mennonite Church: A congregation with purpose (2)

Prayer Concerns:

- Thank God for the positive response to the conversational English classes in December, and ask for guidance as we decide when and how to offer them again.
- Pray that we might help young people at the school connect with God through our friendship and example.
- Pray for clear communication in Aaron's English classes and Laura's work with the sex ed. curriculum.
- Remember new believers Yuri and Sandra as they participate in baptism preparation classes. Pray that they will know how to respond to resistance from their families and friends.
- Ask for guidance as we collaborate with the church's new youth ministry

News from the Kauffman family in La Mesa, Colombia

Back to School

No bells. Kindergarten through eleventh grade in the same building. Forty-some students crowded in each classroom. Matching uniforms. Somewhat flexible class schedule from 7:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. Two daily recesses totaling 45 minutes, with students spread out in the two basketball-size outdoor courtyards.

These are just a few of the characteristics that make Colegio Americano Menno a lively, exciting, very Latin American school. Coming from the fairly traditional Rockingham County Public Schools in Virginia, it has not always been easy to adapt. But we're learning to appreciate and value this model of education in the Colombian context.

We began teachers' meetings at the end of January, meeting for four to six hours a day for about six days to discuss and plan schedules, discipline procedures, grading, and other teacher responsibilities.

Getting to know one another was a high priority as well, with six of the fifteen teachers new to the school. We spent a day at the Colombian Mennonite



Church's camp exploring the grounds, learning the history of the church, sharing food, and playing volleyball. It was perhaps the most fun we've had since arriving in Colombia.

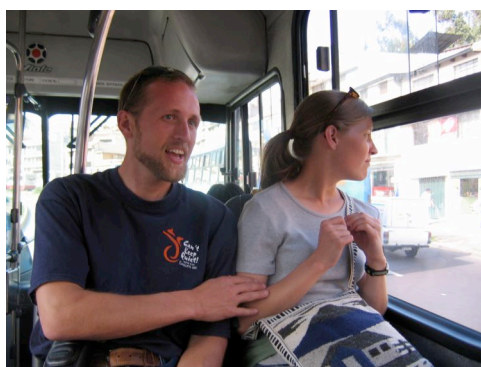
One issue that arose early in the meetings was how to maintain and promote the school's Mennonite identity when only seven of the teachers belong to the church. The predominantly Catholic faculty reassured principal Vargas that they could support the school's faith-based values and keep

Story continued on page 2



Aaron explains the English program to the eighth graders.

Ecuador Vacation: "We Are Not Alone"



David & Ericka on tour of the Quito Mennonite Church ministries.

Story continued on page 2.

We landed in Quito, Ecuador, on January ninth, eager to begin our first vacation. After five hours by bus, we ascended to Cebadas, a very rural indigenous community where fellow MNN workers David and Ericka Gingerich serve at an indigenous elementary school. As temperatures dipped to 40° F, their cozy home kept us warm, beds piled high with blankets.

We enjoyed long hours around the table with them, eating homemade pizza, meatloaf and brownies, and telling stories about our first few months "on the mission field." It was refreshing to connect with friends like David and

Aaron & Laura
Kauffman

Calle 5, # 14-32
La Mesa, Colombia

Tel: 011-57-1-847-2553
aaronlaurak@gmail.com

*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
from
Zion Mennonite Church**

Chairperson
Matthew Hunsberger

Prayer Coordinator
Mark Mast

Church Communicator
Sharon Showalter

Finance Manager
Todd Stoltzfus

Encourager
Mandi Stoltzfus

To contact, write to:

Kauffman Support Team
Zion Mennonite Church
2160 Zion Church Road
Broadway, VA

kauffmansincolombia
@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:

kauffmanhome.net

Mennonite Education, Colombian Style

their personal differences to themselves. They were also happy to leave the chapel responsibilities to the Mennonite teachers.

Principal Vargas equally emphasized the need to balance promotion of Mennonite values with respect for the faith background of the student body, the vast majority of whom are Catholic, though many belong to various Protestant churches, and a few are even followers of Islam. While parents recognize they are investing in a Mennonite education, Vargas makes a careful distinction between providing a faith-based education and selling a particular way of worship.

As persons carrying the label of "missionaries," walking that line is not always easy. We strive for excellence in our teaching, while being a positive Christian presence and offering invitations to church-based activities whenever possible. We look to Jesus, who was always invitational, but never coercive or manipulative.

Principal Vargas is supportive of our approach. He shares our desire to see the school produce leaders for the Colombian Mennonite Church. His enthusiasm for our involvement with the church's youth program has reassured us that we have the freedom to promote this ministry among the students.

In Focus: Mennonite Church of La Mesa, Colombia

History: Started in 1953 by North American Mennonites. Initiated Colegio Americano Menno (CAM) two years later for children of evangelicals who faced discrimination. Despite early resistance the church has gained respect over the years, with about 160 members today. Current pastor, Martín Gonzalez, was born in La Mesa and graduated from Colegio Americano Menno.

Services: Sunday Worship (two services); Tuesday Prayer Meeting; Wednesday Bible Classes; two Thursdays a month, Business Leaders with Purpose; two Saturdays a month, Youth with Purpose

Member Profile: Average education level (for Colombia), with 60% non-high school graduates, 35% high school graduates, 5% with some higher education; 50% employed regularly, 20% sporadically, 30% unemployed

Vision: A great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission will make us a great church.

Ministries: Outreach to displaced and low-income families in nearby town of Anapoima; small groups; Arise and Shine Missions Institute; bookstore; sanctuary of peace (peace advocacy program)

"We're Not Alone" Continued

Erica who truly understand where we come from. Not only are we all new mission workers, we also share some of the same college friends and professors!



Laura and Abby enjoying a sunny day in Quito, Ecuador

A few days later we got a whirlwind tour of the ministries of the Mennonite Church in Quito, led by Lilita Ocampo, a Colombian missionary. She has a large workload that she currently carries alone with her boundless energy and enthusiasm. She made us feel at home and we brought a little bit of Colombia to her!

The day after we made it safely back to Colombia, we wept as we looked at pictures from the trip. We felt the distance from them—and from our families and friends back home—much more acutely. But it made us realize we are not alone in this experience as strangers serving God in a foreign land, and that is a source of comfort.