

## Articles:

- Understanding the cycle of cultural adjustment (1-2)
- A youth group with a purpose (1-2)
- In Focus: The González Family (2)

## Prayer Concerns:

- Pray that the upcoming youth retreat would foster deeper friendships and guide youth in their walk with Christ.
- Pray for safe travels and refreshed spirits as we enjoy vacation with Aaron's parents.
- Remember the Colombian Mennonite Church as it goes through a change in leadership and discerns how to be the church that God wants and Colombia needs.
- Pray for the teachers and students of Colegio Americano Menno as they begin the second semester at the end of July.
- Pray that church members would continue to support the outreach to disadvantaged families in the area, committing both time and resources.

*News from the Kauffman family in La Mesa, Colombia*

## Highs and Lows

Mission agencies usually talk to their recruits about the cycle of cultural adjustment before they go on assignment. Essentially this means that they will go through various ups and downs during their term of service as they learn to live and work in a setting different from their own. We have found this idea helpful for understanding our own feelings during this first year in Colombia.

We arrived with our senses primed to take in all the new sights and sounds of La Mesa. The first two months were an exciting time of getting to know new people, learning to communicate more adequately in Spanish, and figuring out how to navigate the day to day activities in our new home.

Around Christmas we had our first major low point as we began to question more of what we were experiencing. Why do they have to have the music turned up so loud in church? Why can't they build straighter roads that don't make you

## Purpose-Driven Youth

Over the past two years, La Mesa Mennonite Church has adopted Rick Warren's purpose-driven church model for its mission and ministries. The church's vision statement says, "A great commitment to the great commandment (Mk. 12:29-31) and the great commission (Mt. 28:19-20) will make a great church." Implicit in those two well-known passages are the five purposes of church, as delineated by Warren: adoration, community, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. La Mesa Mennonite strives to make these purposes the guiding principles of all of its ministries, from Christian education to small groups to ushers.

When we arrived in September, the one major hole we saw in the church's ministry was the lack of a youth group.



carsick? Do they have to put cilantro in every dish?

With the advent of the school year in January we again felt renewed excitement, as we got involved with classes, meetings, and the church youth group. Our energy felt limitless despite some of the long days of working from seven in the morning till nine at night. Laura enjoyed working with the students in the Red Cross brigade, while Aaron found designing the English curriculum and planning youth events to be invigorating challenges.

Further accomplishments for Aaron have included delivering two sermons and teaching a World Religions class at the church's mission institute. Laura's collaboration has been crucial in launching a holistic outreach—including health promotion—to disadvantaged families through the local church.

*Story continued on page 2*



*Youth group members Milton, Alejandra, Jenny, Joanna and Lorena with Laura*

It wasn't long before some church members were suggesting that we assume the role of "youth leaders" at church. Though willing to be part of a youth ministry team, we refused to be the sole leaders. We did not want to create a ministry that would die when our term ended. So along with the pastoral couple, two adults, and one

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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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## Highs and Lows, Continued



*With Janna Hunter Bowman and Virginia Showalter on a hike near our home*

In spite of these opportunities to serve, the past month we have sensed another low, emotionally and physically. We've been tired, battling successive minor illnesses, and feeling less enthusiasm for daily tasks. We've reflected on our reason for being here, asking ourselves, and God, difficult questions.

Vacation has come at just the right time. The midyear break—from June 23 to July 17—is giving us time to replenish our energy. Visits from friends and family also have lifted our spirits. Virginia Showalter, a friend from home, just visited us in the last week of June. Aaron's parents, Dennis and Rose Kauffman, will be with us for the first two weeks of July.

Remember us as we travel with Aaron's family and his parents get to spend time with their only granddaughter, Abigail. Pray that we will be able to begin the second semester at school with newfound strength. And please pray that we will find God's abiding presence in the midst of the ups and downs of adjustment to life in Colombia.

## In Focus: The González Family

The González family, including Pastor Martín, his wife, Elsy, and their children Andrés, Ana María and Stephany, have become our closest friends here in La Mesa. Both Martín and Elsy grew up at the local Mennonite church and attended Colegio Americano Menno. After living and working in Bogotá, where Martín also studied at the Mennonite seminary, they returned to La Mesa in 1999 to pastor the church they had grown up in.



*Ana María, Abigail & Stephany*

Our friendship with them grows not only out of working together, but also out of mutual interests in music, the outdoors, and other cultures. We regularly share meals and talk about our current joys and struggles. Abigail has developed a love for the González family as well, and sometimes knocks on the door saying "Ana" when she wants to visit them. We thank God for coworkers like them who have also become our close friends.

## Purpose-Driven Youth, Continued

young person, we created a ministry called *Jóvenes con Propósito* (Purpose-Driven Youth) in February of this year.

Our first event was an introduction to the group's reason for existing, a summary of Warren's five purposes, followed by a movie and discussion time. About 12 young people came. Since that first meeting we have held numerous events and doubled in size, with several youth from school in attendance. With the leadership team we have tried to plan events that fulfill each of the group's stated purposes: times of worship and Bible study to emphasize adoration and discipleship; game nights and a campfire event to promote community;

performing songs and skits at church to develop the youths' ministry gifts; and volunteering with the church's outreach to disadvantaged children as a practical way to do evangelism.

An upcoming camping trip is sure to be a highlight of the year for the group. The youth have been raising funds for the three-day trip by showing World Cup games on the church's video projector, offering their services to church members through a "servant auction," and planning an inter-church volleyball tournament. Please pray that this July 21-23 event will be a transformative experience for the group and for youth who have yet to commit their lives to Christ.