The End of an Era in Venezuela

T. S. Ashley Milne

Venezuela, officially called the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is a country on the northern coast of South America. Venezuela's territory covers 916,445 square kilometers. The population is about 29,105,632. By comparison, British Columbia is 944,735 square kilometers.

The tracking of the one-hundred-and-seventy assemblies in Venezuela today commenced in Puerto Cabello in 1916. Valencia was second and San Felipe was the third assembly to be formed, in October 1920. Today there are fourteen assemblies in the state of Yaracuy, of which San Felipe is the capital. Out of the first ten assemblies established in Venezuela, six were in Yaracuy, and continue to this day. It was in this state, and in San Felipe, where my parents served the Lord, from 1947 until 1997. This is the place where I spent my childhood until 1958 when I returned to the place of my birth, Belfast. Somehow the impressions of those early years never left me, and I have returned to visit more times than I have kept track of.

My latest visit to Venezuela in mid January of this year was perhaps the best ever.

The assembly in San Felipe, with about one-hundred-and-fifty in fellowship, had just passed through a difficult time, for over three years. During that period, no blessing was seen and a heavy cloud hung over the place and none of the Lord’s servants had visited. Only one showed up...
However, all changed when sin was dealt with. Thank God! Once the discipline was carried out, amazing blessing resulted and continues. As Psalm 133 states, “There the Lord commanded the blessing.” Due to a heart issue, I had not been allowed by the doctor to visit them for over three years, while all this was unfolding, which I knew nothing about at the time. What a joy it was to witness first hand, and see and hear how the Lord commands the blessing when conditions are put right.

During the month in Venezuela, I visited nine of the assemblies in Yaracuy where Dad laboured in the Gospel. The blessing had started long before I arrived as, during the conference in San Felipe last October, they were amazed and encouraged when over seven brethren in the work arrived to give help. It was the largest conference in many years. They started off thinking it might have to be cancelled as they had “zero” in the assembly funds. Yet, after feeding the largest crowd ever during the three days of conference, they ended up with a large surplus. Before the year end, a lady was saved while sitting at the back one Lord’s day morning. Just before my visit, another lady called Dulce, was saved during a prayer meeting.

The year commenced with a week of Prayer Thanksgiving and Praise, followed by two weeks of Prayer and Intercession. When I arrived in mid January, for seven nights we had twenty minutes Prayer; twenty minutes Gospel; forty-five minutes Ministry. On the Friday evening, Dulce had been witnessing to her sister, Eneida, who was visiting from Caracas. In the ministry meeting, while hearing of those who were saved and baptized in the book of the Acts, she remained in her seat, in tears, wanting to be saved. That night she accepted the Lord as her Saviour, at the end of the meeting.

The next evening, Saturday, the hall was filled to capacity when, following the Gospel meeting, two sisters were baptized and received into fellowship the next day (Sunday) as were four brethren who were restored to the Lord after being out of the meeting for a number of years.

I was able to visit eight other assemblies in Yaracuy. Some have grown remarkably with upwards to one-hundred-and-fifty to two-
hundred in fellowship. As has been said by others, the Venezuelan brethren tend to be good Gospel preachers. "Basic evangelism" is still the norm. Backyard meetings, house meetings in the homes, neighborhood Sunday schools, tract and text distribution, meetings in the homes of believers who have died, these meetings are as important as are the series of meetings by visiting and local preachers in assembly halls and attract just as many people.

Upon arrival in Venezuela I was met by our dear brother Uel Ussher with whom we have always enjoyed great fellowship. Upon leaving the Yaracuy, I spent a day with Samuel and Sharon Ussher. While in their home the evening before returning to Canada, I received a call to say that the son of Dulce, Alejandro, age seventeen, following the meeting on Lord’s day evening, professed to be saved when he got home.

Uncertainty still surrounds Venezuela’s future, as it has before. However, what is different now is that the country’s poor have experienced a sense of empowerment and are more likely to be involved in the political decision-making process of leaders to come, whether democratic, capitalist, or of the Chávez-Bolivarian kind.

Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution was indeed legitimate in that it brought the plight of the poor to the forefront of political discussion, much more than any other leader has in recent memory. We can rejoice in this great fact also. The Lord Jesus said in Matt. 11:5, “The poor have the Gospel preached to them” and the results speak for themselves in Venezuela today.

There is complete liberty to preach the gospel. Religious education is taught in the schools and I was told that all churches are equal in this opportunity, so the assemblies in a number of places are participating in this. Before Chavez came to power, only the Roman Catholic Church had access to the schools.

“Our God of Grace often gives us a second chance, but there is no second chance to harvest a ripe crop.”
We really enjoyed the recent visit of our brother Ashley, and appreciate his sustained interest in the work here and his willingness to come so far to help us. The Christians in the San Felipe area really appreciate his visits and no doubt it gives our brother great joy to visit the places where his parents spent their lives and saw the work of the Lord established. We were glad to be able to spend some time together; fellowship with those like-minded in the faith is precious.

Since the end of last year we had Gospel meetings at the home of a dear brother who went to be with the Lord on December 24th. He had been saved and in fellowship for fifty-nine years and with his wife were faithful members of the assembly. They had eleven children but only four of their daughters are saved. Many unsaved attended the meetings nightly - sons, daughters and grandchildren, some who had not been under the sound of the Gospel for years. Our son William helped each night. The Lord gave real help in the preaching and we all felt that God was speaking. It was sad to finish and leave them still unsaved. We continue to pray that God will continue to speak and that we will have good news of their salvation. One young married woman professed to be saved and a boy of eight whose parents are in the assembly. We pray they will go on well.

There are a number of assemblies in this area, some just half-an-hour’s drive and others a little further away, that have been having Gospel meetings since the beginning of the year. We admire their exercise and all the effort they put into taking the Gospel to their families, friends and neighbors. Local brethren are responsible for the preaching and at times these dear brethren come straight from work to the meeting. God has blessed these efforts in the past and many have been reached and saved as the result of the Gospel being preached. We will value prayer for these meetings.
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Samuel and Sharon Ussher

At present we are in Valle de la Pascua, a large city where Stephen and Helen Redpath live. We pitched the tent and a few unsaved have been coming in to hear the good news of salvation. This is a hard place for the gospel, with much religious confusion due to evangelical groups who present an adulterated message. They know not Christ and use the gospel as a means of financial gain. Sad to say, they actually oppose us when the sound truth of the Gospel is preached. Nevertheless, we have been encouraged with a few coming in to hear. There is no assembly yet, so yesterday we travelled two-and-a-half-hours to break bread at the closest assembly. Stephen and Helen make a real effort to take the small group of believers who live here, to remember the Lord each Lord’s day.

At the end of December a young couple was commended to the grace of God to serve Him in the centre-north of the country. For a number of years they have shown an exercise in the spread of the gospel, so we commend them and their three children to you for your prayers.

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Earlier this year I was able to visit the assembly in Ramadinha, in the state of Ceara. The drought in their region has been severe as they have had no rain since January and do not expect any until February of next year. We took up some food and water for them, along with Bibles and other literature. Spiritually, we found them happy and strong in the Lord. There are nine in fellowship. Some have travelled south to work, so their number has been reduced in these last months. There are five neighbors who come regularly to the meetings to hear the Gospel.

The assembly there is very isolated - three thousand kilometers from us, and at least a thousand from the nearest assembly. They remain on their own most of the time, so we ask you to pray that the Lord might preserve them from false teachers, discouragement, and the difficult conditions in which they live.

We have an exercise this year to publish a number of books written by assembly writers that have already been translated into Spanish. John Ritchie Ltd. has graciously granted us permission to print some of their books. There are an increasing number of young believers who are eager to study the Scriptures, but there are few doctrinally sound books printed in the Spanish language. We need guidance from the Lord regarding this aspect of the work.

There is still an open door for the preaching of the gospel in Venezuela and we rejoice to see the Lord working and His grace in allowing us a part in it. We continue to sow the Good Seed of the Word in the hearts of the unsaved and try to strengthen the saints, looking to the Lord to give blessing for eternity.
In Aguai, where we have had a weekly Gospel meeting for the last eight years, we had the joy of receiving a young couple from another part of the country. We have had contact with them for a number of years and felt their relocation was an answer to prayer. They are living in a small one-bedroom house that we have behind the Hall in Aguai, and we ask your prayers for their help in the work there. With the addition of this young couple, there are now eight believers in Aguai. We continue to pray for an assembly to be established there, as the Lord enables us. The printing work continues, due to the sacrificial work of various brothers and sisters.

We have finally adapted to the changes in our workflow which we were forced to implement due to Dad’s progressing Parkinson’s. His situation has deteriorated to the point where he is not able to help in the literature work in any way. Please pray for him, as he is forced to come to terms with his limitations, and for Mum, as she seeks to care for him and still carry on with the proofreading of all our publications. The translation of the Ritchie Old Testament Commentaries is progressing well and many believers are looking forward to their publication. The quarterly magazine “O Caminho” continues to be distributed freely, along with the other books and booklets the Lord has enabled us to publish. Due to this literature, we receive much mail with questions about Christian living and especially the N.T. pattern for an assembly. Some contacts, sadly, lead nowhere, but we thank the Lord for the good numbers of believers (individual and companies) that have expressed their appreciation for the printed word. Please pray for Jose Ricardo, a brother in Salvador (a large city about two-thousand kilometres from us). He wrote a few weeks ago, saying that the believers he meets with have been very open to the teaching they have received through our literature and requesting a visit for further help. We have never had any contact in that large city before.

We would also value your prayers for Edgar, a middle-aged man who lives across the street from the Hall in Porto Ferreira. There is no assembly in that town, but we have a Gospel Hall and maintain twice weekly Gospel meetings. Edgar came to the meeting a few weeks ago. He has been to some denominational groups but was disappointed. He had been listening to our meetings for quite a while, from his home (doors and windows are kept wide open during the meetings, because of the heat), and he was impressed with the simplicity and sincerity of the Gospel message. He has been coming regularly since then and seems earnestly searching for the truth.

I am recovering from an operation for a hernia that developed because of the first operation I had two years ago, when my gall bladder was removed. The stitches were only taken out after two weeks, as there was a reaction from my body to the plastic mesh that was inserted during the operation. That set things back but I am thankful to the Lord that I am recovering well and hope to be back to normal soon. We mention these things, valuing your prayers for God's blessing and help in these difficult days.

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At the end of the past year we visited Gort again, a round trip of five-hundred-and-sixty miles. We went with a little apprehension as we knew that some had returned to Brazil because of the deteriorating economic situation here.

To our surprise this visit was definitely the most worthwhile of all, as many new doors were opened and we encountered many folks who
were once Catholic, now with no affiliation with any denomination. Near to where we were staying, there was an electronics factory which make solenoids and pumps, where quite a number of Brazilians work. We managed to leave much gospel material there.

We went around four housing schemes where some recognized us from previous visits. Severo Miguel had quite a number of radio programs recorded and we were able to produce CDs with short Gospel messages. These seem to be more accepted than tracts. The Portuguese calendars were also well received.

Athleague has one of largest slaughter houses in Ireland. It is about an hour’s journey N.W. of Gort. Sixty-five Brazilians are working there and some were already inquiring if we were going to turn up this year. It is a delight to know they were expecting Portuguese material. In Roscommon we made some new contacts who were glad to get the CDs and calendars.

So it only remains for us to pray that the ‘Good Seed’ will find fertile ground and have the eternal effect on these dear souls. We are greatly encouraged to see that a good number are still living in the south of Ireland.

Yesterday we returned from another visit to Gorey where our daughter, Shirley, and her husband, Michael, have been working for the Lord. It was a joy to renew fellowship with the saints there and see some new converts in the number. As the little room is now fairly cramped for space, they are praying that the Lord will provide and guide them to more spacious accommodation. It was most refreshing to see so many saved from their Catholic background, now rejoicing in the Lord Jesus.

Jean is still managing after her fall. Although the broken bone in her wrist has healed, she still has much pain in her upper arm, and uses a tri-wheeler in the house to give her some stability. The Parkinson’s problem has made her unstable as she could fall very easily. Her last fall was difficult as she had to have eleven stitches inserted in her face. Thankfully it is healed up, leaving her with a large scar above her left eye.

We plan, in the will of the Lord, to return to Brazil in late August, for another spell. We certainly would very much value the prayers of the Lord’s people that Jean will have enough strength to cope with the journey.
Helen and I are now by ourselves, as Sarah and Daniel both relocated back to Northern Ireland towards the end of 2012. We are living on the very north side of the city, beyond Tyger Valley and are happily in fellowship with the believers in the small assembly in Northpine, close to us.

There are over twenty assemblies within the city limits, some now small in number and quite weak. Pray for Crawford and Elim which are two of the smallest and closest to the centre of town. Much of the assembly activity is now in the eastern half of the city - from Bellville down to Mitchell’s Plain – as well as in the Southern Peninsula. As we have time, we visit some of these smaller assemblies and seek to encourage and exhort the few believers that still remain.

There are a number of conferences in the area which we support with a bookstall of ‘Christian Publications.’ We have travelled a little further outside the city to places where we are able to set up the book tables and have been much encouraged by the growing interest in Bible commentaries and sound literature, especially Study Bibles which are increasingly popular.

MINISTRY AND GOSPEL: At the end of 2011, after much interest and prayer, we prepared a large four-metre full-colour chart on “End Time Events,” based on H. Ironside’s Revelation Chart. The Lord has used this tool in a way that we could not have anticipated. We also provide leaflets for door-to-door invitation and study notes for each night - whether a two, three or four-week series. This became the main focus of our movements in the Province in 2012. We have touched over fifteen assemblies to date, with these subjects, as many of the smaller meetings combine for this ministry which has a clear gospel message as well. Numbers attending from outside the assemblies have been quite significant and it has been humbling to see on more than one occasion the hand of the Lord blessing in salvation. In one series, in Michell’s Plain area, an older man trusted the Lord on the first Sunday of the meetings, and his wife also on the last Lord’s Day. We rejoice to see the Spirit of God at work, and acknowledge the prayers and burdens of local saints as being so influential in this activity.

We visited the Overstrand, a coastal area about an hour-and-a-half from the city – for four weeks last August. This area, centred in Hermanus, needs much prayer. Of the nine assemblies, many are small and the numbers few, yet the interest, both in ministry and literature, was sustained. Some believers travelled over two-hundred kilometers nightly to be at the meetings and on many occasions the discussion after, went on very late. We are continuing to visit this area – one weekend a month – as we can. The desire for growth among some of the younger believers is a real joy to see, as well as the consistency of older sisters, who are most faithful, some with unsaved families.

CALENDAR DISTRIBUTION: We continue to provide Gospel Poster Calendars, in a number of formats, for distribution by the assemblies in South Africa, and further afield. The system of printing allows for a variety of languages to be used as demand dictates and each assembly can have contact details included. These are simple cardboard posters but have proved most effective in taking the gospel into homes and areas where otherwise it would not penetrate.

Not only English and Afrikaans, but many vernacular languages have been printed for 2013
Gospel Poster Calendar for 2013.

Setswana, Xhosa, Zulu, Herero, Swahili, Lunda and Luvale, among others. Over 120,000 have already been distributed in door-to-door work, nursing homes, bus and train terminals and government offices of every kind; locally in the provinces of South Africa and through parts of Botswana and much of Namibia as well.

We rejoiced to hear of souls being saved in 2012 through the power of the Word of God on the calendars, some who were in very isolated circumstances. We pray for such blessing – most likely unknown down here – to follow the distribution of the Word in these early months of 2013 as well, to the glory of the Lord Jesus.

NAMIBIAN OUTREACH: Helen and I had been praying for some time about an outreach trip to Namibia and the way opened up at the end of last year. We packed and loaded almost 500,000 tracts and calendars for N.W. Zambia (via Paul & Eunice Poidevin and their new trailer). We loaded up the next day with 35,000 calendars for Botswana and Namibia. Along with Dan & Stella Nguluka from the Maun assembly, we gave out over 10,000 Herero and English calendars, over 20,000 tracts and had many opportunities to present the gospel. It was not unusual to have an “open air meeting” in a filling station forecourt, with attendants and customers gathered around the Land Rover to hear the gospel message told out from the verses on the different calendars.

Loading the literature for NW Zambia.

Please pray for the land of Namibia. Lying to the north and west of us, easily accessible, with English now the official language, a land of welcoming people with a ready ear for the gospel among the African tribes, yet it is a land with no assembly workers or testimony. We hope to visit again at the end of the year, and print other additional languages for 2014.

P.S: PRAYER REQUEST (Kay Reid) Please pray for Doug Reid. He has practically lost all the vision in his only working eye. The doctor says the liquid is hardening in the front of the eye. It is so depressing to see him try to study with a magnifying glass and, even then, can hardly see. He really needs much prayer.
We have had three marriages lately in Ciudad Colon. We rejoice too that the believers are manifesting good capacity in forwarding the work. A young man in Grade 10 professed recently. One of the brethren here had spoken to him about the salvation of his soul. Under conviction, he returned to his home, and there he trusted the Lord to save him. His family has not encouraged him much, but now he is happy to find himself surrounded with so many friends. This young man has just requested baptism.

Another interesting case relates to the husband of a sister in the assembly here. He had professed previously, but his manner of life did not correspond to that of a believer. However, he was hospitalized with cancer. There he realized that he was not ready to meet God. Facing the possibility of death, he says he trusted Christ to save him. His life has changed completely, to which his wife bears testimony. He is thankful that the Lord turned the difficulty to his eternal blessing. He obeyed the Lord in baptism recently and is taking his place in the assembly here.

I have had a cataract removed and recently had my fifth surgical intervention on my only good eye. It is difficult to be led by the hand and travel with limited vision of creation.

Last August Olya and Ilya were married. They wanted their marriage to be a testimony to their family and friends who were not saved. Although they received a lot of criticism from family and friends about having a real Christian wedding, they stuck to their decision. They used my Dad’s wedding ceremony which was translated into Russian. We spent hours planning every little detail and a week before the wedding everything started to go wrong that could possibly go wrong, due to unforeseen circumstances. We have laughed a great deal, looking back and remembering everything, and fortunately, in spite of all the glitches, the actual wedding day went very well. Everyone said it was the first they had seen of such a wedding. One of Olya’s friends said that for the first time she heard words of truth and realized she needed to make changes in her life. Another said that she would be interested in coming out to meetings. It was a real encouragement for them to see that their decision to put the Lord first could have lasting results for eternity.

I would like to ask for prayer for this couple.
Olya has a real heart for God and a desire to work with children. She has always supported any assembly activities and is a tremendous help to me. She is interested in helping orphans. Lord willing, we will start to develop a children’s work. Due to financial circumstances she has to work hard right now but her desire is that the Lord will bless Ilya with a job that will enable her to quit working so that she can devote her time to serving the Lord. It is wonderful to be able to have this fellowship with her.

There have been encouragements in my English classes as well. It is possible that Ira is saved. She started coming out a year-and-a-half ago and at first was very quiet. This summer she started to ask many questions about salvation. She began to stay after the class, to keep talking. She has completely opened up to the Bible. Her grandmother was a very religious woman and always thought that she knew the truth, but Ira told me that when her grandmother went to confession, she told the priest she had nothing to confess because she never sinned. I believe Ira began to change when she realized her grandmother was wrong.

Last November she asked me that if a person had accepted Christ, but had been baptized as a baby, was it possible for them to be baptized biblically as a believer? She cannot imagine how it will be with her family, but I would like to ask for prayer for her as it seems that she is saved and she wants to be baptized. It has been very wonderful to see the changes that have taken place in her this year so please pray that the Lord will give her the strength to go on for Him in spite of the cost.

Please pray for Nina and Sergei who come on Tuesdays. Nina works at the orphanage and has become increasingly interested in the Bible. We are studying Genesis right now and she did not know anything about creation and sin and God.

It is all very new to her and she wants to learn more. Please pray for her salvation.

Sergei grew up in an orphanage and is in university now. He is trying hard to get ahead in this world. He is very positive in spite of the tragic situation of his life. He does not know much about the Bible but recently had some personal problems which upset him. We talked about how the Lord can help us through these difficult situations and how the Bible can teach us the right way to live. I think he has realized that he can have a different life and friends. I will start inviting him out to assembly activities as I think he will be interested now.

I also started a once-a-month study at my home on the tabernacle and offerings. Different ones from the assembly and the English class were interested so it has been good for them to get to know each other and study the Word of God together.

I finally got all my residency papers. It was quite a long ordeal and also a very humorous one but at least now I have the stamp in my passport for three years. Now that I no longer have to study for my visa I have more time, so I have been going to the orphanage more frequently and the staff has really become friendly and I have been able to talk to many more of them.

There are many other names to pray for but I will not add more for now. I just ask that you pray that the Lord will continue to open doors and work in people’s hearts to bring them to the Lord. One important thing is discipling these young Christians, to help them grow and take on responsibility and develop their gifts. The tabernacle study and our monthly cooking club/Bible study, help with this and Brian and Igor from the assembly are trying to work on this too. I would appreciate prayer that the assembly will
really grow and be able to truly reach out to the city around us.

Many of the ones I work with have been interested in the end times and the coming of the Lord, so we have been studying this and it really makes one think about how important it is to stand fast and not be weary in our service for the Lord as we are waiting for that great shout.

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Many of you in past have received a letter or e-mail from us requesting prayer for one matter or another and so, in the interest of soliciting your continued, active and accurate prayer, we want to let you know how God has answered prayer and how things are going presently.

We have been in Portugal for one year. That time has been largely spent in full-time study of Portuguese. We have found it a challenging process, but a time where God has proved His faithfulness to us. We are now getting to the end of our studies with a forecasted conclusion in May. I am not sure that we will ever reach the point where we are satisfied with our fluency, but we have an excellent teacher who has skillfully guided us through acquiring her mother tongue and learning much about her culture.

Our children have done well in their time here. In the beginning, our routine was very strict with homeschooling every day, a walk to the park to use up energy, and an outing most Saturdays to help prevent cabin fever from the seven of us living in a very small apartment. The older boys felt the loneliness of leaving friends and the familiar atmosphere of Canada more than the younger ones, but were able to express their hearts and when they were becoming weary of our repetitive routine, the way opened up so they could attend school here, from September onwards. They have now been attending an English-speaking Christian school run primarily for missionary kids. It has been an excellent experience with very challenging academics, the opportunity to be with peers, and, perhaps most importantly, a new and very positive atmosphere to spend time in. Seth and Abigail go to a small primary Portuguese Christian school with hope that they will acquire the language there. They are enjoying it very much and it has given Elizabeth and me some contacts with Portuguese Christians which are rare here where evangelical Christians account for less than one-percent of the population. This month our oldest, Zachary, turned thirteen, and our youngest, Abigail, is turning four, so they are growing quickly.

The experience of living in Portugal has been invaluable for language learning as it is total immersion, with few people outside of the tourist areas having much knowledge of English. Having spent time in Angola, it is interesting to see how many similarities there are between the two countries and note the influence Portugal has had on Angolan culture. There is a lot of bureaucracy here, flamboyant driving, especially on motorcycles, and a reserve with foreigners, and similar types of open markets. Even in the big supermarkets, most parts of an animal are sold, (think pig feet and ears) and most animals (from snails and octopus to entire baby pigs and rabbits, all in one piece!) Many people have a love for the land, with large gardens and small farms everywhere. Seeing castles that were built by the Moors, more than eight-hundred years ago, has been fascinating, and the large plaza where many faithful believers died in the Inquisition, has made history come alive for us.

When we think about prayer that God has answered, we are reminded of the burden of
waiting for our house to sell in Fredericton, NB, wondering what would happen with such a flat market. Then, with expensive insurance needing renewal in a few days, an offer came in and the sale went through in record time, strengthening our faith in God's timing. We are thankful for the many Christians in Fredericton who gave of their time and effort in keeping the house clean, the driveway cleared of snow, and our mail forwarded.

There are those who have encouraged us by making a point of staying in touch regularly and we are so thankful and blessed by these faithful fellow-labourers. There have been times we have felt lonely here but have been blessed by getting to know other missionaries who already live here or who are learning Portuguese as well, with a view to moving on to other countries. We are excited about the prospect of welcoming Joel and Kaleigh Griffin (Fredericton) to Portugal as they come to study Portuguese before going on to Angola. This is their first time living in a foreign country and learning a new language so please pray for them and their two young daughters, Elysa and Svea.

Among the many prayers that God has answered in these last months is the question of how to go about applying for an Angolan visa. Fourteen months ago, when I made application for a visitor's visa to Angola, of thirty days, it was an arduous process involving multiple phone calls, much uncertainty, and finally a flight to the Angolan Embassy in Ottawa in the hopes that the visa would be granted six hours before my next flight was scheduled to take me to the U.K. and on to Angola.

Now that we are applying for visas to live in Angola as a family, the process enters a whole new paradigm of ambiguity and challenge. However, we met a missionary pilot here who works for Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) Canada and he put me in contact with the lady in their organization who handles all visa applications. She readily agreed to guide us through the process and has spent hours on the phone for us, even visiting the embassy and has given us clear guidelines to follow. We have spent many hours translating my CV into Portuguese, writing various declarations (such as that we will obey Angolan law), getting medical reports, X-rays, blood work, fingerprints, criminal record checks, reference letters, and on it goes. Many of the documents have to be notarized by a lawyer, then verified by Canadian Foreign Affairs, before going on to an "official" Portuguese translator. Our contact in Canada is well known and respected by the staff in the Angolan embassy and that relationship is critical and often can make the difference in how quickly an application is accepted and processed. We are not certain of the timing as it may take from three months to two years. Once the visas are issued, there is a sixty-day window of time in which we need to travel so please pray about the timing.

Another matter for prayer is where God will have us, once we get to Angola. At this point, depending on further guidance from the Lord, we are planning to spend some weeks in the Saurimo area near Ruth Hadley (U.K. missionary), getting ourselves sorted out. Hopefully at that point the vehicle we have ordered should be imported, licensed, and ready for use. It will be a vital and useful tool. Ruth Hadley, with the help of the Singletons (U.K.), have done a remarkable job restoring some homes on the old mission in Biula which is one of the places we are praying about. Biula is central to a number of rural local churches and associated medical clinics where I could be a help. We still have a burden for the Luvale people who are further southeast in the Cazombo area, closer to the Zambian border. It is also in that area where many of my trips into Angola, from Zambia, were made, and where a dear Zambian friend and fellow missionary lives and works, Mutondo Masaha. He continues running
a medical clinic that we worked at together and, with men from the local church there, making trips deep into areas that are unreached with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are due to go out to pick up Joel and Kaleigh from the airport and are so thankful for your interest and would continue to value your prayers that the Lord will accomplish His will in our lives.

Botswana, AFRICA
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P.O. Box 12, Serowe, Botswana, Africa.

On the 1st of January we had our Setswana local conference and two of our own brethren gave ministry. Colin Raggett, from Palapye, spoke on the importance of hearing and obeying God’s Word. The other brother, called Letsibogo, from Serowe, but now Gaborone, took up the subject of prayer - really a lovely challenging balance to commence the New Year. It was so good to see so many there. We sat outside under the shade area for there were too many to be accommodated in the hall and it was a bit more comfortable. As Colin was speaking, loud thunder came very close and shook us, yet the Lord in His goodness heard our cry for safety and kept us dry, as the rain fell somewhere else. Praise His Name! We were able to try out some new hymns and this was very enjoyable. We are slowly building up our repertoire of hymns.

Mavis, one of the first fruits of the work over forty years ago, came from her village of Shoshong, one-hundred kilometers away and introduced us to two girls who had trusted the Lord there. They are the first fruits of her little Sunday school. May the Lord keep them for they come from unsaved homes. We have much to thank and praise the Lord for and look forward to more blessing this year.

We had severe heat in December with little rain but nothing like what we need so we hope it will come back, especially in the areas where the folks have planted corn.
Since last December, when it was discovered that my cancer had returned, I have had a long time of hospitalization and constant medical supervision. At this moment, I am out of hospital and at home, having started on chemotherapy on the 7th of March and the second series is to start on the 25th, God willing. Margaret has just been on the phone with the oncologist and he wants to see me to assess what the second series should contain. Christian friends have offered us the use of an apartment in downtown Santiago which is not far from the hospital.

I am now considered an ambulatory patient so that I go and sit for a four-hour session at the Cancer Hospital at which time they attach an apparatus which will deliver about forty hours of chemo at which time I return for them to remove it. Two weeks later, I will return for another assessment of my condition and they will decide what to include in the third treatment.

We look to the Lord to answer the many prayers being offered and thus make progress through use of chemotherapy.

I can continue to work on the preparation of the Sunday Lessons which form part of the San Felipe Collection, www.sslessons.org. We also publish a meditation each day which is on the Internet. A young doctor has joined me in this daily presentation. We have over 1,400 subscribers who receive a copy in their mail box.

On the 16th of March, we ended the presentation of the radio program PALABRAS de VIDA (WORDS of LIFE). It was on March 16, 1963 that we began the RADIO program with a fifteen-minute-a-day release and a thirty-minute program on Sundays. It is marvellous to think that for FIFTY YEARS, we were able to preach the gospel with not one interruption of being taken off the air. Despite upheavals in the political world, including coups and earthquakes,
the Word went out faithfully every day for fifty years at various stations. We thank God for enabling us to reach this milestone.

Thank you all again for remembering us in prayer as we continue to trust in the Lord to make us well so that we can continue to serve Him in this land. It was in November, 1959 that we first arrived. For fifty-three years and four months this has been our field and service. God has been faithful. We continue to believe in Him Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2nd Timothy 1:9.

Spanish OUTREACH
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Several of the neighbors have commented on how good the Hall looks. We have gone from being the worst looking building in the neighborhood to the nicest. There is still some work to do, but we are nearing the finish line. We have passed out one-thousand 2013 calendars around the area of the Hall. Each page of the calendar has a sticker with a picture of the Hall, the street address and a webpage address. We value your prayers that the Lord will use His Word in this way to speak to many.

This past week, a family of four who live across the street, walked into the meeting. They told us they received a calendar, visited the website and wanted to come to the meeting. We trust and pray that they will continue to come and that it will be a break-through in reaching out to the neighborhood.

Due to being in a trilingual assembly, I make a copy of my ministry notes in English, Spanish and Korean. It is extra work and very time-consuming, but it has proven to be a blessing to those whose first language is not English.

A couple of months ago we received a young man into the assembly. He had been coming faithfully to the meetings for several months, before asking for reception. He used to attend a mega church, but feels this is the place where the Lord would have him gather. He is an intelligent and exercised brother.

He is in the Navy reserves and they recently informed him that he has to do an eight-month tour in Afghanistan. His assignment is confidential, so we are not allowed to share what little he can tell us. Your prayers for his safety will be much appreciated. He is presently in training for his tour.

A young couple has been coming to the assembly meetings in Norco. Her
father attended some of the conferences during my visits to Guatemala. He told his daughter to get in touch with me. As it turns out, (in Los Angeles terms) they live fairly close to the hall in Norco. So it has been encouraging. They profess to be saved, but are not in the meeting.

Another sister was added to the assembly in Norco, about six months ago. She was baptized near the end of last year and it was a joy to receive her. A couple of months later, she was tested on her commitment. She has a good job close to her home, but her boss told her that she was going to have to start working on Sundays or she would be fired. She told her boss that she could not work on the Lord’s Day or during the times of our midweek meetings. It looked like she was going to lose her job, but the Lord overruled. Her boss let her continue working, but her hours were cut. Even that is working out, as she often gets called in, to work extra time. Another person was received into the fellowship about four months ago.

Every year, in December, Nelly puts together prizes for the children who come to the meetings. Also, she makes something for the families who used to come. We are happy to say that, during this past month, several of those families have started coming to the meetings again. We would appreciate your prayers for their continuation and restoration. They have been saved out of the gangs; some stopped coming to the meetings, several years ago. We have kept in continual contact with them through prayers and personal visits, which takes a great deal of our time. There are a few other families that we continue to visit and pray for, and we trust they will soon return to the meetings.

One young man, through the use of drugs, had a scary encounter with the evils of the occult world. He was brought to the door of death but the Lord had mercy. It has been a real wake-up call for him. We value your prayers! Since the encounter, he has been coming to the meetings.

A couple of weeks ago a young boy from Glen’s Sunday School class told us he professed to be saved. As a family, we rejoice that three of our seven grandchildren have professed. As grandparents, we appreciate that they are being raised in the environment of the assemblies and the Word of God. Every morning and evening they have family Bible time. The older ones have memorized different chapters from the Bible. Ken and family live in Grants Pass, Oregon. Glen and his family live by us in the Los Angeles area.

In November, we visited the Spanish assembly in Atlanta, Georgia. We had a week of meetings and were with them for their conference. The meetings were well attended and there were about eight-hundred at the conference.

A couple of weeks ago, we had Gospel meetings with brother John Fitzpatrick in Fresno. We were impressed with the good number that came and their attentiveness to the messages.

We were at the inaugural conference in Orangewood, Arizona, during the last weekend in January. We felt the Lord gave help, both in the ministry and Gospel. Two people professed to be saved. We stayed over for the Tuesday night meeting in the Spanish assembly in West Phoenix.

Lord willing, we will be in another conference in Guatemala, from the 20th to the 24th of March. We have been to several Guatemala conferences, the largest being over five-thousand in attendance. They tell us this one is generally even larger. They have asked me to speak three times a day, for forty-five minutes, during each session.
Following the Guatemalan conference, we plan on going to El Salvador for two weeks. We will be there for their conferences as well. We come home for a week and then leave for the McKeesport conference. We have been invited to the inaugural Spanish conference in Springdale, Arizona, the last weekend in April.

Last month, I had surgery to remove a basal cell carcinoma (skin cancer) on my forehead. Thankfully all went well, but I had a four-week recovery period, which is behind me now. The doctor says I can return to my normal schedule...whatever that might be?