

Dear Family and Friends,

We are thankful to God to be able to send out another report on the Lord's work in Guatemala. It has been the pattern to return from our end-of-year travels and get right into the work. This year was no exception, so we are getting out a newsletter of the work in general.

Our Travels

It thrills us to report that this year we did not have any unpleasant incidents with the thieves helping themselves with our goods while we were traveling from state to state or from country to country. It may have helped that we kept our briefcases or backpack "attached to our hips" wherever we went—whether in restaurants, office supply stores, or bathrooms! 😊

We actually launched our end-of-the-year reporting a little bit earlier. In August Hi set up our booth at Polishing the Pulpit in Tennessee and while there gave our report to the Morristown congregation. He returned back to Guatemala and came back to the US in September to speak at the Bear Valley Lectureship. While in Denver, he gave our report at Dahlia Street and at Windsor. On October 10, Byron came to speak at the Linder Road Lectureship and gave the report to that congregation while he was there.

On Thursday, October 26, Hi returned to Indianapolis for some quick printing and gave our report in Howe, TX on Sunday and in Waterbury, CT on Wednesday with a quick stop in Denver in between. He was already worn out when Byron and Snezana arrived to the US on Saturday, November 4. 😊 We made visits to three congregations in the Denver area on Sunday and headed to Europe on Tuesday. Our first stop was in Bosnia to visit with Snezana's family for a few days. We were glad we did make this trip because it turned out to be the last time we were able to spend some quality time with Snezana's dad, **Ilija Krndija**, who recently passed away on March 6. While we were in Bosnia, we worshiped in her parents' home and sought ways to share our faith with the family and to encourage her mother **Irena** in her walk with the Lord.



After departing Bosnia, we traveled to Germany for the annual 54th Annual Euro-American Family Retreat in Rothenburg ob der Tauber. We continue to be in charge of the teen program and we count it a true blessing to serve the young people during this event.

This year the theme was "When the Spirit Leads." The adult sessions were focused on developing passive members into active leaders and mentors, with the emphasis on "Leads." However, there was a communication mix up and we thought the emphasis was on "Spirit" (think being led by the Spirit from Romans 8). As a result, the lessons we prepared for the young people were around the subject of the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives today. Maybe living in a society with many charismatic religions influenced our lessons in that direction. Regardless, we thought the young people benefitted from this oft-neglected subject.



Before departing Germany, we were blessed to be invited by **Stephen** and **Jill Swint** (and their three children, **Paydan**, **Kambria** and **Bryson**) to spend some downtime and to celebrate Thanksgiving with them prior to returning to the U.S. It was a very enjoyable time and we really appreciate the warm Christian hospitality they extended to us. And, the food was fabulous!



Once back in the U.S., we continued to make visits to report on the work. While in Arkansas, Kentucky,

Alabama, Missouri, California, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Georgia, Washington and South Carolina, we were blessed to see many of you. We are so thankful for the kind and loving treatment we always receive when we visit our supporters. You make us feel very special.

During our travels we received heart-breaking news about **Gail Carver** (Hawatthia's and Byron's sister), who was diagnosed with breast cancer. We will include more details on her situation further below.

Our Return to Guatemala

Once back in Guatemala, we got busy with the work. Hawatthia and Byron began teaching in the full-time program and in the Saturday program. It was the last quarter of our Epsilon class for the full-time program, but only the second year for our Saturday program. We will share more details about this in our ITL newsletter.

Snezana got busy with the many responsibilities at home and with trying to get her DPI (Documento Personal de Identificación, a long word for a Guatemalan ID). While we were still traveling in the States, we checked the website of RENAP, the agency in charge of distributing IDs, which indicated that Snezana's ID was ready for pick-up, but we were skeptical. The previous year, Byron and Snezana had made dozens of trips to this agency and to the immigration office to correct a mistake immigration had made. Add to this RENAP's 8 to 12-month delay in getting IDs to people and you will understand why we were skeptical. However, on January 12, Byron and Snezana walked into the RENAP office again to see if



Snezana's DPI was ready. To their surprise, it was! After going from one line to another for a few minutes, they were finally sent to the area where they give the IDs. Another 15 minutes or so and Snezana had her new ID in hand! Wow! What a tiresome process!

As we rejoiced over this victory, we learned about Snezana's dad's heart attack. In the following days Snezana left for Bosnia and Byron followed her a week later. In our previous reports we shared with you some of the mountains and valleys of that journey. When Snezana's dad passed away, her mom requested for us not to travel back for the funeral, but to keep our plans of visiting her in May. She thought we had done what we could while Dad was alive and the short time before the funeral would be too difficult on us. So, that is what we are planning to do. God willing, the three of us will make

a trip to Bosnia to spend some time with the family. Please pray for our travels and for our time with the family. We want to share our faith in the best way possible and to encourage Snezana's mother in her faith.

In February, Hi traveled to the FHU lectures in Henderson, Tenn., to set up a booth to promote ITL and the work in Guatemala. While in the U.S., he also was able to visit three churches in Texas—in Anderson, Livingston and Wharton—and the Juno congregation in Lexington, TN. In March, he traveled to Indianapolis to do some preparations for the ITL lectureship and graduation. While in the States, he also visited the brethren in Worthington, KY, where he preached and gave the report on a Sunday morning. He traveled to Portland, TN, where he met with and gave the report to the Fountain Head congregation that Sunday evening.

WEI Teacher

In April of 2017, Tom Langley, President of World English Institute (WEI) and a good friend of ours, wrote us an e-mail to introduce us to a brother from Norman, OK, Blane Anderson. Tom described Blane as "one of our more dedicated and enthusiastic WEI teachers who has a passion for missions" and explained that Blane was interested in short-term mission work and he had taken an interest in the work in Guatemala after reading one of our newsletters. There is no doubt that Tom's kind and complimentary words about the work here probably helped to peak Blane's interest. Thanks Tom!

Soon after we began to correspond with Blane, we learned he was retired from the University of Oklahoma and as a US Naval officer. Being Air Force veterans, we had great respect already for him! 😊 More importantly, Blane is a faithful Christian who serves as the WEI coordinator for his home congregation, the Westside church of Christ, who loves Terry, his wife of 34 years, his four children and his one grandchild.



From left to right:

Hawatthia, Lindell Mitchell, Benny Montejo, Snezana, Byron and Blane

Our conversations turned into concrete plans and Blane decided to come to Guatemala in February of this year to serve as a WEI teacher for a one-month period to follow-

up with WEI students from our previous teams and from his Internet ministry. We were excited. Unfortunately, we were not here to welcome Blane when he arrived to Guatemala. He was already scheduled to be in Tennessee for visits to supporters and for the FHU lectures and Byron and Snezana were in Bosnia because of her dad's health problems. However, we were confident that Blane would be in good hands with Anibal Ramirez and Benny Montejó, who made certain Blane was taken care of. It also helped that Blane is such an experienced traveler. When we returned to Guatemala, we got the chance to meet Blane face to face and to see his enthusiasm for the Lord's work firsthand.

Blane's work was very fruitful. He was able to meet with several of the previous WEI students, with some of his own students from his Internet ministry, and was even able to establish new ones while he was here. Here is what Blane shared in one of his e-mails:

I held my lessons at the Wendy's Restaurant not too far from Hotel Las Americas and at the Pops Ice Cream shop which is near the hotel as well....Because I was in public with my studies, I was able to reach out to patrons of Wendy's and Pops as well as the workers in each of the establishments. I enjoyed this because it gave me the opportunity to meet people and talk about my faith.

We were very impressed with Blane and were very thankful that he chose to come to Guatemala to work for the Lord. We are also thankful to his wife, Terry, for her support of his work. We have had the blessing of talking with her since his visit and are eager to maintain a good relationship with this faithful couple. Please keep them in your prayers as they consider future opportunities to serve in Guatemala.

Linda Vista

Walter Dardon continues to do a good work with the church at Linda Vista. His biggest challenge has been several erring members who show some signs of improvement, then slip back into their waywardness. It has been frustrating for him and for the church. Walter also continues to teach at the public school in La Paz where the July mission team worked last year. Through this contact, Walter was able to get scheduled to teach ethics and morality to the high school kids. He says it has been challenging for him, but he is convinced it is a good opportunity to influence these young people in a good way.



Anibal Ramirez, our coworker, continues to receive treatments for his Hepatitis C. The doctor who is seeing him believes the homeopathic treatments Anibal has received reached their limit. He is now seeking to treat Anibal with more traditional medications. The doctor is currently working with some contacts that he has so that he can get most or all of the medicine donated. Please pray for this to be a reality and for Anibal to be able to finally win this long battle with this disease. We are also looking into trying to find a way to get to him the appropriate medicine we heard about last year.



Our involvement with Linda Vista continues to be in a supportive role. Byron and Hi continue to teach the New Christians' Class and preach periodically. Snezana recently began to assist with the children's classes on Sundays.

Currently, we are seriously considering the possibility of beginning a new work close to the ITL facilities. There are several reasons. First, we believe that Linda Vista is at a point that we are no longer needed there. Second, the drive to Linda Vista is progressively getting worse as the city's traffic gets worse. Third, we believe we can be more effective in outreach if we worked with a congregation closer to our homes. Fourth, we believe the new work would be a great training ground for our Bible students. We recently visited an existing church not too far from the ITL facilities, but the men were cold and indifferent to our offer of working with them to build up the local body. So, we are going to look for another location that we believe will be conducive for a new work.

On a sadder note, a once very faithful sister in Christ, Dinora, has gone from bad to worse. A couple years back, she struggled with her faith and with some resentment toward some members. This affected her attendance and involvement in the work of the church, but she was still making efforts to seek the Lord. Over the last year, she has experienced several traumatic events in her life—her sister committed suicide, she was in a motorcycle accident, which injured her quite a bit, her daughter broke her arm, and her son suffered a concussion recently. Yet, none of these things seem to have moved her any closer to repentance. It appears she is involved in sinful

behavior, she is neglecting her children, and we know that her husband has moved out because of all this. We share this with you so that you can pray for us to handle the situation the best we can. Dinora is no longer in fellowship with the church, but we feel we must act to protect the children. Please pray for us to have wisdom to know what to do in this sad circumstance.

Adoption

Byron and Snezana are excited about finally being able to move forward with the adoption process. Without Snezana's DPI, it was not possible even to begin the process. The first thing they needed to do was to attend an adoption workshop. The government agency, CNA (Consejo Nacional de Adopciones or National Council for Adoptions) requires all interested adoptive parents to take this course. During this time, they inform those interested in adoption on the big need that exists for adoptive parents, on the adoption process, and on the proper attitude one must have during this process.

Byron and Snezana originally were going to schedule this shortly after Snezana got her DPI in January, but because of Dad Ilija's health problems and subsequent death, they waited until they were both back in the country. So, on Thursday, March 1, Byron and Snezana nervously attended their first meeting. They were really impacted by the presentation and came away more convinced than before that this was the right thing for them to do. Allow us to share a little about what they learned in the workshop.

First, the whole adoption process is free. None of the workers associated with this agency and the process can charge for any of their services. This was implemented to eliminate bribes, corruption and child trafficking. Second, anyone from any country can adopt as long as he or she is a Guatemalan resident (this is why Snezana needed her DPI). Third, you cannot choose the child you are going to adopt. If you decide to continue with the adoption process, you can choose certain parameters (the preferred age, sex and number of children; and whether you are willing to take a child with any type of mental, emotional or physical challenges), but the agency will match you to a child or children based on those limited preferences. They do this because they believe the process should imitate having natural children as much as possible. They explained, "When children come into families, the families accept them just as they are because they are family. They love them and provide for them and deal with their personalities and growing pains. This is the mentality you must have if you plan to adopt." It was a different concept, but we both liked the method. If we choose to adopt, we will love the children that God puts into our family, just as all other parents do or should. Fourth, after you turn forty, you are no longer allowed to adopt children under four.

Fifth, if you are open to adopting siblings, the process will likely go much quicker because these children and the older ones have priority in the legal system.

Once the adoptive family has all their paperwork ready, submitted and approved, they move to the second phase, the psychological evaluation. They are evaluated for their mental health. Hopefully, they will not conclude Byron and Snezana are loony! ☺ The third phase is the social and judicial evaluation. During this phase the home and penal records are checked. There should be no problems here! The next phase is a parent training workshop. This is to give tips and counsel to the soon-to-be adoptive parents. Byron and Snezana will take any help they can get! Finally, once the child or children are assigned to the adoptive parents there is a time allotted for the parents to visit with their children and for parents and child/children to get a little familiar and comfortable with each other before the children go home with their new parents.

During March and April, Byron and Snezana continued on gathering all necessary paperwork, making several trips to different places. We are glad to report that finally on April 20, Byron and Snezana had all their paperwork ready and they successfully submitted it to CNA. Now they are waiting to get a call for the first appointment and the evaluation phase. Please join us in prayers for the adoption process and for the children they are going to adopt.

Gail Carver

Back in January, we sent a prayer request for Gail, Hawatthia's and Byron's sister, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had shortly before started her chemotherapy treatments. First, she received treatments every other week. After the first round of treatments, she moved into a weekly program. We are grateful to God that she has responded well to her treatments. She continues to maintain a very positive outlook and we are thankful for that spirit during this trial. We are also thankful for all your prayers. God willing, her last treatment will be on May 18. We are eager to celebrate that day with her!



Gail Carver with her husband Mark and granddaughter Hailee.

On another note, Gail's insurance is not going to cover all her expenses, so she will have to cover these costs. As a result, if you are interested in assisting her with some unforeseen expenses, please contact us to find out how you can participate in the fund-raising efforts currently taking place. Any amount would be greatly appreciated!

Prayer Requests

Please remember to pray for all the requests we made in this newsletter.

- Prayers of thanksgiving for generous supporters
- For Gail and her recovery
- For Snezana's family as they mourn their loss
- For our trip to Bosnia to bring comfort and encouragement to family and friends
- For God to use us to sow seed for a future church in Banjaluka, Snezana's home town.
- For God to guide us in our plans for a new church plant closer to ITL
- For Dinora, her husband David and their children
- For Byron's and Snezana's adoption process
- For the WEI ministry in Guatemala to grow and prosper
- For the ITL students and staff

We would like to close by saying THANKS to everyone for your support through your prayers, encouragement and financial contributions. It is our prayer that the Lord will bless us to continue to serve jointly for His Cause. May God bless you always! We love you!!!

Con amor en Cristo siempre,

Hawatthia

Byron and Snezana

Missionaries to Guatemala!

Next Newsletter

In the next newsletter we will inform you about the ITL lectureship, graduation and anniversary, along with news about the new full-time class and other details.



Teaching the CENTRAL MESSAGE in CENTRAL AMERICA!

