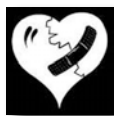




P O Box 160
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The Ortegas September 2020 Newsletter



Broken but Beautiful

In our modern disposable-minded world, things that break down are almost immediately considered worthless, and trashcan worthy. Broken hearts, however, are beautiful in the eyes of the Lord.

Our hearts are very broken, as our church has suffered our first COVID-19 death. Our dear Laura Herrera, 52 years of age, has gone to be with the Lord after a few weeks into her battle with the virus. Laura and her husband Juan came to our church very broken-hearted due to confidential matters. God's grace did a wonderful work, fully restoring them in a few months and bringing them closer to their Lord and to each other. Now, she is completely and truly pain-free and joyful in the arms of Jesus. Please pray for Juan and his three surviving boys who miss her deeply and who find themselves broken-hearted.



Waiting for our Back-to-School kids
to driven in for prayer and their gifts

What do all the flags above represent, you may ask? In the midst of the current pandemic and struggling to meet the spiritual needs of our church family, we find ourselves with the challenge to resort to new and never-before used technologic methods to accomplish our goal. Some of our old equipment was quite broken, useless and in some cases non-existing. So we've made some purchases to take the Marantatha ministry on a virtual mode. I am so very happy to inform that COVID-19 has compelled us to be resourceful in order to keep ministering to our church members... and even going beyond our immediate borders.

As a result, we are now serving our congregation as they connect with our church services online, but we are also reaching people way outside of our own immediate church members. In fact, we currently have people connecting to our church services from Mexico, Ecuador, Barbados, Panama and more. I've also had the privilege to speak to a group of young people from Ecuador, and they in turn sent my presentation online to Costa Rica, the US, and even Japan. Yes, COVID-19 has bruised up some, but it has not completely broken us. Actually, we are happy to announce that we've been compelled to look upward and move forward in faith. We currently hold virtual services from church (with a reduced number of staff members, of course) on Sundays and Wednesdays. Every Thursday other Life Groups connect, while I teach my own Life Group on Friday nights, and I "meet" with our facilitators every other Monday night via Zoom, for biblical instruction, encouragement and prayer.

However, keeping ourselves at a distance from each other has been very challenging. So, a couple of months ago, we invented a church "car drive through" around our neighborhood and into our church parking lot. It was such a great experience for all of us. We did this again for our Back-to-School program, while we prayed for every student that drove in.

A major ministry that has really been active among us is that of intercessory prayer, like day and night. We can't neglect this spiritual discipline, especially during these difficult times. Now, as to some believers wanting to go to the next level and getting baptized, well this is also a new for me, as I share the Bible study on the subject via WhatsApp. The ages vary considerably from about age 9 to about 45.



The power of
praying women

My dear wife has restarted her Bible study/prayer group every Tuesday morning. While taking their precautions, they are drawing close to the Lord in church. Others (men and women) have agreed to meet on Saturdays at 6 am to pray in different hospitals in McAllen and surrounding cities. So, while we continue to be a national hotspot for COVID-19, we are doubling up our time on our knees.

This is definitely not the time to stop prayer. In fact, so often it is our broken state of human impotence and ignorance that leads us to find our true source of power through prayer in the presence of Almighty God. Can I get an AMEN?????



Little Ollie and
his proud grandparents

Family matters: Brad, Priscilla and little Ollie have moved down from Dallas closer to us, like literally "next block closer". They will be here for about 8 months while their new house gets built in Austin. We are so very thankful that both of their jobs allowed them for such a move. Sarai continues to struggle with major health issues, as her lupus has now contributed a third tumor in her body. Please uphold her in your prayers, as at times, she gets pretty depressed about her condition. She remains alone in San Antonio where her specialists work. We have none in McAllen. Sylvia has already moved into her school dorm in a nearby university and has just been hired at Chick-Fil A. We got back from her Loeys-Dietz syndrome specialist in Houston last week. Unfortunately the diameter of her already enlarged aorta right

next to her heart has further increased, much to our personal disappointment. This growth spurt will require a serious surgical procedure in a not-too distant future.

My dear wife continues to faithfully serve alongside me, even while she constantly deals with chronic aches. Because while it is true that we are in pain, we are not completely broken, for when we are weak, then are we really strong.



Ready for our church car drive-through

Our plans for a Panama trip remain on hold. We so long to go there to have a memorial service for Mary's mother and close that chapter of her life along with all of my wife's siblings. My trips to Cuba and Ecuador are also pending on conditions to improve. I am rather anxious to visit them, especially those precious ones in the most rural areas of Cuba. While we wait, we watch, we work and we worship, for regardless of what may happen, God is God and God is good. So, we are bruised and at times broken, but by all divine means and purposes we also stand by His grace beautiful in His sight, and bold.

Today more than ever before ... thank you so very much for your faithful support.

By God's Grace;
For God's Glory,
Franc & Mary Ortega