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The Ortegas' 2021 March-ing Newsletter

Dear friends, March is about ... ah, marching forward, as into battle. It is also about planting and watching things come to life and grow.

Events There are many things in life that come and go and become part of the distant past, such as snow that melts after winter stays behind. Speaking of snow, this is something that we simply do not see this far south in Texas. Well, as you may know, a few weeks ago, not only did we see it; we also FELT it. In fact, we had a major freeze, knocking out electric power in our house and freezing up water pipes in many of our local homes.

Maranatha Matters With the purchase of new chairs, proper social distancing, sanitizing sanctuary every Saturday evening, masks, etc. we are moving forward. In fact, although we've lost just very few individuals, who are only connecting with us online, and about 2 families that we've lost, several other families have been faithfully attending. Some have come as a result of a personal or marital crisis, and they are finding comfort, strength and encouragement. Other than God, who has been instrumental in this whole process? It has been those who initially came in similar ways,

Our Beloved Facilitators



Ready for God's People. We are already having to add a few more chairs, where possible, to accommodate the new comers.

bruised, battered and broken, but who have found forgiveness, peace and restoration. What a wonderful message these precious lives offer to others. Essentially, the gospel is a hungry person telling another hungry person where he found bread. As a result of this, my dear wife and I currently find ourselves quite busy listening, counseling and encouraging many who continue to come in much need. We are so very grateful to our facilitators who have carried so very much ministry weight. They

have been disciplined and delegated some ministry opportunities. What a joy to see these men and women fully engaged in sharing God's Word, praying, encouraging and sharing material goods to their Life Group members.



Emilio in Rural Cuba, working on coal production

Overseas Ministry Due to COVID-19 restrictions last year and up to the current day, our ministry in Cuba and Ecuador has had a limited reach. I continue to minister via WhatsApp in both countries and find myself very privileged to do so.



Emilio with his last 3 new believers, right after baptism

Some time ago, we were able to financially invest in the purchase a chainsaw and donated it to a rural ministry. With it, a group of pastors is producing coal and helping themselves to alleviate the financial crisis they are currently facing. What a great way to anticipate two years ago these challenging days and be able to donate this chainsaw. We also rejoice for a contribution to purchase two motorized bikes to a church-planting ministry. To those of you who participated in these two missionary efforts – thank you so very much. By the way, my Cuba funds (donated as a one-time contribution by a great friend a few years ago) are pretty much all gone. We have really been able to stretch them to the max and I now find myself looking up to the Lord once again to replenish them so I can be ready when the country opens up. Should the Lord lead you, you may send your tax-deductible contribution to our TBM headquarters listed above. Please be sure to designate it is for the Cuba fund. Speaking of, the following pictures reflect in a very minute scale the labor that these faithful servants are during this pandemic. As to Ecuador, some of you may recall that one of our spiritual daughters from Maranatha married to an Ecuadorian seminarian. For some time they have been very busy in a church-planting outreach down there. I consider myself privileged to be a part of their dynamic ministry and have physically participated with them and I continue to serve them virtually. I truly hope things settle down soon, so I may resume my teaching ministry with them.

Family Sarai continues to deal with health issues in San Antonio, and now dealing with a few needed repairs in her little house. We are so very happy that the Lord has provided a few hours of employment online from home. This keeps her mind off some of her physical challenges and has managed to get some degree of medical insurance. On this subject, thanks so very much to the 3 families who have so graciously participated in her material needs a couple of months ago. This was before her getting this current job, and your contributions greatly helped her appreciate God's faithful provision. Please continue to pray for her. As to Brad, Priscilla and little Ollie, who live about a 3-minute drive from us - we continue to enjoy their proximity and be able to see them quite often. Soon they will move up to Austin, about 6 hours north of us. Sylvia is a freshman at our local university and working a part-time job. We are very happy to inform you that the diameter of her enlarged aorta has not grown in the last 6 months, for which we are very grateful. Mary, my faithful marriage and ministry partner, continues to face some physical challenges but is always pushing forward, whether at home or at church, with diverse ministry opportunities. I remain as enthusiastic as ever about living life to the max, appreciating what God is doing in and through my life. What an experience this has been!

Panama Most of you know that our plans to visit Mary's mother in Panama were canceled just one day before leaving a year ago this very month. A few weeks later, her mother passed away and to this day, we have not been able to fly down there to close this final chapter of her life. The Lord willing, we are making definite plans to go down there next month. This will definitely be a very emotional trip for my wife and all her siblings down there. This will be the first time that my wife goes to her native country and will not find her mother. Please pray that God will make this trip a reality.

The End Finally, before wrapping things up, I'd like to use the last few words to express our heart-felt gratitude to all of you who, by prayer or provision of missionary support (or both), make our diverse ministries possible. Whether here in McAllen, Texas, in Cuba or in Ecuador, your precious investment in our marriage and ministry, empowers us to keep investing our lives on matters that have an eternal value. As I've often written before, only in heaven will we really know just what our earthly deeds accomplished. Only in heaven will God's faithful servants hear: *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"* (Matthew 25:21). The very anticipation to hear that heavenly reception makes us all refocus our attention as to just how we are investing our time on earth.

Franc & Mary Ortega
By God's Grace; For God's Glory! Romans 11:36

