

# News from Sara and Dakin

United Methodist Missionaries

December 2012



## El Prado

Earlier this year we received a request from a United Methodist Church member in Texas. As a young woman from Ecuador, Pilar had married and then moved to the US where she and her husband became involved with a Hispanic United Methodist congregation. She came from a small community about an hour and half from Quito that is famous for its small dairy farms. This community is located on a large hacienda or farm named El Prado that extended for several miles around and had been confiscated by the government of Ecuador. Landless farmers, many of whom had previously been employed by the farm, moved in and divided the hacienda into small family farms of about 5 acres each where each family has a few milk cows.

When Pilar came back to Ecuador this year to visit her family she was concerned that there was no church in El Prado, families seemed to lack the hope that they really could have better lives and she felt that the message of the Gospel could make a difference. So Pilar looked to Sara and the Methodist Church in Ecuador for help.

During her visit, Pilar and her family organized a community event with about 70 children and adults for a Saturday afternoon. Our Methodist Bishop and his family and Sara and Dakin went to participate.



Pilar with children at El Prado



Women of El Prado

The Bishop celebrated a worship service with the adults while we led the children in games, songs and Bible stories.

Afterwards all shared cake and local soft drinks and while talking with some of the leaders of the community they asked if the Methodist Church could come to El Prado on a regular basis to lead a "Bible Encounter" in the community. Sara volunteered to take the initial lead in this and with the help of various others has been going to El Prado every other Saturday since last August.



Sara in El Prado

Some 50 children, 3 to 14 years old, are now involved and come for an hour and a half every two weeks where they learn Bible stories, paint, sing and draw and have time for games. The children are now practicing for a small Christmas pageant in which they will use their own livestock. Pilar's family is very involved in coordinating the Encounters in El Prado and we are praying that next year the Methodist Church can do more work with both the children and their families.

Each Saturday we learn more about the children and their families and their need for God's loving care, care that we can share with them as a church that not only talks about the Gospel, but lives the Gospel through actions. And as a church, we receive the community's love and care when we find the children waiting anxiously for the Encounter.



Children in El Prado

## Dakin

Dakin's travel is as hectic as ever, although he is traveling a little bit less this year, he is visiting ten countries a year to audit and still enjoying it. In our last newsletter, he wrote about the redemption of Luiz, a former policeman in Sao Paulo, Brazil. This article was picked up by the United Methodist Spanish language publication "El Interprete" and appears in the November issue.



## Mission Intern

We were blessed this year to receive a Mission Intern from the General Board of Global Ministries' Young Adult Program. The Mission Intern program is a three year internship for young adults that focuses on issues of social justice. The interns serve the first half of their term in a placement outside of the US and the second half in a US placement. Becky Dean arrived in late August and has been living in Quito while she studies Spanish and her placement site is being readied. Although she speaks excellent Spanish, having majored in Spanish in university, she has been studying a bit more and adapting to Ecuador and her new assignment with the Methodist Church. She will be moving to her new home in a small, rural indigenous community called Romerillos in late November, and will be assisting the pastor of the local church in her ministries with the community and the women and youth of the local congregation. Becky will also be working with other congregations and especially with the Indigenous ministries of the Methodist Church in Ecuador.

One day a week Becky is traveling to a community not far from Romerillos to teach English in a Methodist elementary and middle school. She will continue her teaching after moving to Romerillos. Meanwhile, Sara and Dakin have been utilizing her skills and gifts having her help out in El Prado with the children, helping organize the library at the national Church office, and generally involving her in everything we can. She has been a great blessing to us and although we will miss having her so close by, she will be coming to Quito on a regular basis and we expect to visit her in Romerillos to help support her ministry.



Becky at her first church  
supper in Romerillos

## We have had much to thank God for this year.

We have been blessed in our mission work to be working with the Methodist Church in Ecuador, especially accompanying the ministries with children, with women, with our pastors, with the indigenous Quichua churches and with community ministries in local congregations. We are also thankful for the care and support of our families, friends and churches.

We give thanks to God for the Volunteer in Mission groups that have worked with us in Ecuador this year. The Methodist campus ministry at the University of South Carolina brought 22 enthusiastic university students who worked at the Bilingual Methodist School in Pastocalle painting walls, making repairs and providing medical check ups for the students and their families and the community. A group from the Charleston District of the South Carolina Annual Conference were a great blessing to the church in Pijal in the construction of a new dining hall that serves a ministry with 250 indigenous Quichua children from Pijal and surrounding communities.

We give thanks because God has cared for and blessed our families in Bolivia and the US and for God's care for Dakin during his recovery from surgery.

## Pijal

In August of this year we visited the church in Pijal for an indigenous Quichua music festival in which several indigenous churches participated with music and dance after a combined worship service. It was a celebration of life and diversity, feeling the love of God for all God's people, knowing that God delights in and gives wisdom to all cultures.



Music in Pijal



Gifts

All the visiting churches brought something to share and all received something special. The members of these congregations are farmers who brought gifts of the land they farm as a way of sharing God's blessings in their lives. They gave us bags of beans and corn, fruits of their labor and gifts from God, an Andean symbol of reciprocity. In this time that we celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, these gifts are a symbol of the love of God with us who has greatly blessed our spirit.

In this Christmas season we would like to ask our churches and friends to renew your support of our mission. Without your support, we cannot be present and carry out the integrated mission of Jesus. Your support in our names helps missionaries to serve not just in Ecuador, but in 136 countries around the world. Thank you for your generosity and support.



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Thank you for supporting our ministries

You are a part of God's mission in Ecuador and Latin America  
Pray for the Methodist Church in Ecuador and that God may renew our strength each day  
Please continue to support the Advance projects on the right



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