

## *Ministry Update*

### **January 2024 WE ARE ON FURLOUGH**

Psalms 107:1 "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

The COVID-19 pandemic and migration of hundreds of thousands of illegal Venezuelan immigrants to the US, had made it difficult for us to get visas to the US and Canada. But praise the Lord, after four long years of waiting without physically seeing our daughters and their families, or visiting any of our supporting churches, we finally got visas and travelled to the US, setting base in Lancaster, California, with the purpose of visiting churches in the US and Canada throughout year 2024.

When we arrived, we were both completely worn out. We had not taken vacations in four years. I was personally fighting a flu and had lost 7 pounds in the last three months. Excess work, stress and skipping meals were taking their toll on me. So we decided to just rest for an entire month, enjoying our family here and attending church with them, listening to sound Bible preaching. Now I am glad to say that we have regained our strength, and that we are in good health.

Something new to us - Going on a long furlough or deputation is a whole new experience to us. In the past, we had always visited the US and Canada for periods no longer than five weeks. This time, we are planning to take an entire year. There are churches we have not visited in more than 20 years, while they have faithfully kept supporting our ministry. We will try to visit as many of them as possible during 2024. But that is just one of the reasons for our long absence from our field.



## THE CIRCUMSTANCES BACK HOME

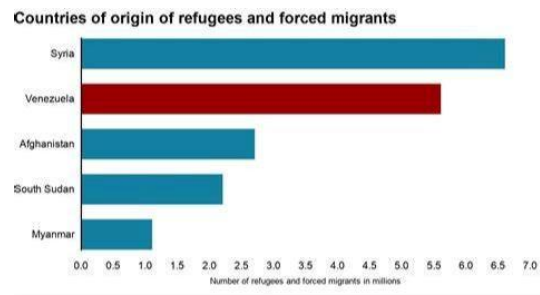
Lamentations 3:22-23 "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

The economic and social crisis of our country that has forced the displacement of 25% of our population to other countries, has turned our ministry into quite a challenge in later years:

- Our church has become the main source of financial support to 30 preachers and their families, providing them also with food and medicine supplies.
- We are running a Bible college with 75 full-time students (most are on-campus students on work-scholarship, all provided with room and board) in two campuses.

These circumstances have placed a heavy burden on our finances, gradually depleting our resources, and are some of the reasons for our long absence from our field during 2024.

But the main reasons lie in our VISION:



## SHORT AND MEDIUM-TERM PROJECTS

- A separate building for our Bible college - Our Bible College needs to run in a separate facility, as it currently occupies a large part of our church building space, killing all possibility for either church or Bible college growth; and limiting our capacity to train more men and women for the ministry, and the planting of new independent Baptist churches.

Our Bible college needs larger student dorms, dining area, library, computer room, more classrooms and a gymnasium. While our church needs to expand its main auditorium, increase the number of classrooms for Sunday School, make room for office space, and set up media production and postproduction rooms for our Bible college and church online offers.

- A Christian School - This would be the first and only Christian school that we know of in Caracas, the capital of our country, a city of five million people. We have Human Resources for it, but no physical infrastructure.
- A Children's Home to tend the spiritual, educational and basic material needs of abandoned Venezuelan children.



### VENEZUELAN LEADERSHIP

While we are away, our church and Bible College in Venezuela will be under the leadership of spiritual and capable men that came to know the Lord under my ministry, are -as well as their wives- graduates from our Bible College, and who have worked with me for years now. Please pray for them (photos below):

- Luis and Mirla Blanco
- Ronald and Roosevelt Parra
- Ender and Maria Blanquicett

And please pray for my wife and I, that the Lord might keep us in good health, and that the purpose of our long absence from our country, people and ministry be fulfilled.



### **VERY IMPORTANT NEEDS AND PRAYER REQUESTS**

A Vehicle - We urgently need a vehicle in good enough condition to travel long distances in the US and Canada. We cannot build a solid schedule, let alone visit churches, without it. We are praying and seeking wisdom from the Lord on how to deal with this particular need.

A Laptop Computer - I couldn't bring my trusted iMac to the US. So we need a laptop computer (could be used) for every-day work while we are on the road, capable of efficiently handling video and audio editing. We have a radio program in Venezuela that we need to keep running, my wife

and I will both be teaching Bible college courses online, and I will be frequently teaching and preaching on video to our congregation in Venezuela

### OUR PLAN

Provided the Lord soon provides a vehicle, we are considering in prayer starting our travelling by visiting churches on the west coast during the months of February and early March, driving up north. Then we would cross the border into Canada, driving east to Ontario. We would then cross the border into the US to visit churches in the Midwest, Northeast, and the Southeast, taking advantage of the warmer weather as we go south. We would finally touch the Southwest and southern California on our way back to that state. This is not written on stone and could change partially or in its entirety. I will keep you informed of our progress in the next few days.

Proverbs 16:9 "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

### OUR SCHEDULE

Our schedule of visits to churches would obviously have to be built around this road map. So, dear pastor, if you want us to visit your church during year 2024, please let me know replying to this email.

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