

# 2024

## Jan:

Unfortunately, and without jest we can say our year here began with multiple 'bangs'. Cartels, that identified themselves as mafia attempted to take over the major cities of Ecuador, guards in prisons were held at bay while two major gang heads escaped and remain at large. This was like living in a "Bonnie and Clyde" movie! Truckloads of armed military as well as police continued to slowly cruise through the streets.

*Everything in the country* closed. . . except the Evangelical Emanuel Church, next to the clinic still held their evening service. The service was packed and was lengthened for prayer covering their beloved country. Youth have been texting their fears about the current situation.

## Apr:

After many years, Dra. Silvia's departed! Finding a replacement felt like an ominous, dark hole. Did prayer play a part – Yes! Fortunately, Dra. Kerly whom Dra. Silvia used as a replacement on her vacations, was interested in the position. We honor Dra. Silvia's departure with the verse "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." It was decided that Loly (office manager) and Eliana (accountant) would handle Dra. Silvia's extra duties.

Pastor Gabriel (He is not only the pastor of the large church next to the clinic but he also has an auto repair service out in front of his home on the street.) started two English classes, younger children and older teens. Pastor Gabriel was needing for the younger class very simple Bible stories (even used books) . . . any other ideas were welcomed!! (PS Pastor Gabriel is not only the pastor of the large church next to the clinic but he has an auto repair service out in front of his home on the street.)



Elizabeth and Gavriel's English class

## Jun:

Against the advice of Ecuador friends, we did leave for Ecuador. The Ecuadorian military has been in full force in Manta (where we ultimately land) and in Portoviejo of which Floron is a 'suburb' and an *excellent* hideout for criminals... The daily shootings are mostly related to the drug cartels and individual gangs fighting for their turf. But it also involves innocent people 'being in the wrong place at the wrong time'. One of our favorite restaurant/hotel acquaintances was unmercifully shot for refusing entrance to 'meet' with a known drug accomplice. The military has confiscated 20 tons of drugs to date and the port city of Guayaquil has had well over 1,000 assassinations since the beginning of the year. But life must still go on like normal – but we wondered what is normal anymore?

The worst area in our province is the city of Manta – a port city. But Portoviejo (where we work) and especially Floron where our clinic resides comes in second. The military shows its presence in Floron every night along with this day shot.



Hopefully, we don't sound omnipotent or above reproach regarding returning to Floron against advisement. Dra. Kerly has been in her new position less than a month and the 'water technicians' have contacted Richard about water production concerns. Thus, neither was wise to ignore or put off. Dra. Kerly surprised us with an overwhelming number of patients attended to. BRAVO!!



Currently Elizabeth did not have any more days that she could remain in Ecuador; so, after 10 days she returned home.

Disappointed, Elizabeth missed wonderful times that also occurred in our Floron Community. Richard was able to attend the wedding of Jhon Sanchez's son Steeven. Elizabeth has known Jhon since her first CCPC mission trip 26 years ago and Richard shortly thereafter



Richard with Idalla and Steeven  
(shadows altered the colors)

Pepe (water technician from Cuba) was seen playing an electric guitar at the Floron 8 church service. He just started after a few months taking lessons from guitar players in the church. He hopes someday to attend the university to study for an architecture degree.



Pepe is on the left

Carlos, husband of our admin clerk Dolores, who was a water technician for several years then attended the Police Academy occasionally gives the sermon at the Floron 8 church. His testimony is incredible!



Carlos

## **Sep/Oct:**

As the leaves in Colorado are beginning to turn and fall, we again see the beautiful and amazing creativity of God in the seasons. . .He has bestowed talents of creativity on humanity. Some of this talent has been ignited by Ricardo Aldaz, who is the creator of two promo videos, one for the clinic, one for the water. Both videos can also be seen on Fundación El Buen Samaritano Facebook page that is published by our clinic and can be seen by these links (<https://fb.watch/u-2FJ0E7Oc/>) (<https://fb.watch/u-2HviUPRI/>) .



Ricardo, wife and son

Another project for Christian outreach into the Floron Community is the Dental Project. Delores, better known as 'Loly' has invested much time contacting the four Floron elementary schools and offering a gratis dental cleaning to all kindergarten children. Hopefully, this will instill the importance of oral hygiene in the moms for their children and develop more community relationships in the process.

We are grateful for Dra. Karolina's enthusiasm to clean the teeth of a possible 360 4/5-year-old children. She sent each child packing with a toothbrush (thanks to a generous donation) and small tube of toothpaste. The project took approximately 2+ months to complete.



Emanuel Church (next door) proceeded to undergo a new roof, ceiling and windows that was constructed by church members.



During construction, church services and activities were held in the general assembly building that was built by donated funds when the school was still functioning.



It was used for the youth group, convocations, and other functions over the years. While the church was under construction, it was perfect for church services Sunday morning, Tuesday and Thursday evening services and Monday evening prayer gathering .

Juliana is now married and remembered for her major heart defect from birth. She contacted Elizabeth using “WhatsApp” to share that she became pregnant and at 8 weeks lost the baby. There is no way her frail, compromised body could support pregnancy. Truth is, *Juliana miraculously survived*. This near fatality now opened the door to educating the couple, especially her husband. Again, it is nothing short of a miracle she survived.



We also totes the “Messengers” that were given by “In Touch Ministries and requested by the church’s music team.



It was heartwarming to discover they are using “Messengers” for devotions. If you are wondering what “Messengers” are, they are not only Scripture in Spanish but also sermons of Dr. Charles Stanley. . . Generally they are used for new Christians and shut ins.

On top of that, we are on rolling electrical outages that started September 23<sup>rd</sup> – losing 10-12 hours per day. This was due to a lack of water in their reservoirs.

This has been a trip with multi-faceted situations. . . and much accomplished despite electrical outages, etc. The age-old problem ‘no work’ is heard often by locals. However, we are amazed that Diana ( new RN) landed a job in the San Francisco ICU Clinic in Portoviejo! She has spent over a year since



graduation humbly working at a jewelry factory stringing beads. We heartily celebrate with Diana and Pepe, her husband!



Pepe and Diana

The little girl Elizabeth helped in Canitas is grown and has two children. About 20 years ago we had a medical mission in Canitas; a nurse practitioner examined little 5-year-old Maria Angelica who had a very pronounced club foot that left her as an outcast from other children. Dr. Cristobal Alban did corrective surgery on little Maria. What an incredible blessing it was to see her and her two children Sammuell and Ami! God orchestrated these incredible circumstances.





## **Nov:**

Due to family commitments, Richard had to go it alone to Ecuador. The list of things that need to be done is always long and never gets completed. However, he was able to finish some very important tasks along with wonderful fellowship with all of our staff and church community.

As we prepared for Christmas, we had a birth of our own. Our administrator specialist Dolores (fondly known as Loly) had their second child on November 28<sup>th</sup> who was given the name Lucas (Luke – from the Bible). Do you think he will become a doctor?



Loly and Lucas

Sadly, we were unable to be there mid-December this year to host the staff Christmas party enjoying food, games, a white-elephant gift and wonderful fellowship..



White-elephant gifts prepared before Richard departed for home.

We've always had Christmas lights in the patient waiting room and, on the roof, but this year they asked us if they could purchase a Christmas tree and decorations. A nativity was requested, so Richard brought down an extra set and mounted it on the wall next to the tree.



The church next to our clinic that we attend while there was able to secure additional funds to finally complete construction and are now enjoying their newly refurbished church. The main structure, the walls and floor, were not replaced. It did receive a new roof, Windows, ceiling, chairs and interior modifications along with new paint jobs.



It was wonderful to be there to help celebrate.

Since they had the chance while Richard was there, they decided that they wanted a group photo.



Our four wonderful water techs always make the day lively even though the work is physically tough, and they get exhausted. Here they are performing a difficult and 'not fun' task changing out the material in one of our water processing tanks. The one in this case is an annual change of the carbon tank.



This year we had an intern student (Jennifer) from the university studying administration. Here she was allowed to work in the water plant taking care of all the computer entries. She will complete her required hours (144) the middle of January.

The country was going through a very difficult season combatting the drug gangs, cartels and mafia. During eleven of the days that Richard was in Floron, there were four different shooting occurrences with a total of six men killed. They were all within close proximity of the clinic. Floron (population of around 14,000) is the “wrong side of the track” of the main city of Portoviejo and it has three known drug gangs.

During the first Friday night Richard was there a friend's son named Joffre was killed. The funeral was held the next day (normal for Ecuador as they don't embalm or do very little cremating due to the cost). Richard was not told about it until several days later as the staff feared for my safety. He was finally able to go visit with Joffre's mother (Maria). Her husband, also named Joffre, had passed away a few years back due to a weak heart from childhood measles.



Scene two blocks from the clinic during the day – three men were killed. The sad thing is that only one was a gang member while the other two were construction workers from Manta.



The last shooting occurred just before Richard left. Due to work being done on our 27-year-old car, Richard rode on the back of our day guards' motorcycle to do a little grocery shopping at a nearby store just outside of Floron. On the way we had a little accident that we believe was an act of God because it delayed me enough to just miss another shooting – bullets flying everywhere – killing one person as we made our way back to the clinic. We've always believed in miracles, and this certainly was one. Richard only injured the left knee (painful but intact) with no other damage in spite of going down to the pavement with the cycle on top of him – there was no need to go to the hospital.

If the drug problems weren't bad enough, the country continued to experience a severe drought. Lack of water in their lakes/reservoirs minimizes the operations of their hydroelectric generators. Ever since September 23<sup>rd</sup> they have had rolling blackouts throughout the country. We would lose power for 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week. Fortunately, Richard purchased a 22kw generator for the water plant back in 2018. The rest of the offices (admin, lab, dentist) are being fed by two portable generators on the roof.

## **Dec:**

Due to lack of visitor days (only get 90 days/yr), Elizabeth and Richard were unable to make a trip to Ecuador.

The good news came to us that on December 20<sup>th</sup> the country was once again able to have electricity 24/7 – no more rolling blackouts due to a severe drought that limited the amount of water for their hydroelectric plants.