



## A Return Visit to Ecuador

The Bible Mission started offering the postal course in Quito, Ecuador in 1998 and response was both quick and enthusiastic, with many hundreds of students signing up in the first couple of years. Beginning in 2000, a number of brethren from Canada and El Salvador traveled down to offer Bible studies, and over the course of several visits we enjoyed consistent attendance from between 35 and 60 people to all the talks. The 'Serrano' was appearing - in more than a vision! - and inviting us to establish a beachhead in this highland town of some 1.5 million people.

Our family moved to Quito in September of 2002 and we lived there for most of the next 6 years. It was a period of tremendous spiritual and personal growth for both ourselves and the ecclesia that is now established there. Working alongside 4 Spanish Truth Corps brethren, and a few other short-time visitors, we had the privilege of participating in the early development of a now relatively independent ecclesia.



In 2008 we moved back to Sidney, BC and re-entered 'normal' life, but with permanent heartstrings tying us to Ecuador and the ecclesia we had worked with. In the subsequent years Kevin had the opportunity to travel back a few more times, but it's never quite the same to go back on your own to a place that is so wholly defined by family memories. But in late December of last year, with some flexibility from my employer so I could work part time and remotely, we had the opportunity to go back as a family for 10 weeks. This was the first time that Rebekah had been back since we left 4 years ago, so she was very, very excited to see everyone again.

The Quito ecclesial hall is in a good-sized house a block from a huge downtown park and there was room for us to stay in the upstairs rooms for most of our visit. We installed an office in one room (so I could work and the kids could do their schooling), and in the other rooms we lined the walls with beds and mattresses on the floor! It was a little tight, but it worked well, providing a convenient base for all our activities.

It was a tremendous joy to go back to an ecclesia where at one point everyone in the current audience had been visitors hearing the true gospel for the first time, and where many now were seasoned brethren and sisters involved with or running all the activities of a typical established ecclesia - from doorkeeping, presiding and refreshments to SS lessons, and exhortations and ecclesial schedules! So the ecclesia has been stable for many years now, but now what...? That was the main objective in our visit - to begin by renewing our relationships with all the brethren and sisters, helping them out in whatever way we could, and from there trying to impart a vision for the ecclesia's growth over the next few years. Over the course of our time there we spent many hours in conversation and personal visits and Bible readings with all the brethren in sisters. We were even able to get down to the city of Ambato, where our



brother Vinicio is in partial isolation. Vinicio lives an hour away from the active Tungurahua volcano, and while we were there we saw it erupting fire and ash - a truly amazing sight.

But the highlight of our trip was unquestionably the Bible School on the Carnival long weekend (Feb 9-12). Our arrival at the camp was heralded by an earthquake (on the Colombian border, but felt in Quito), a 7.0 on the Richter scale, that had the van rocking back and forth on its suspension and the doors swinging open and closed. Even though Quito has many nearby active volcanoes,

earthquakes are surprisingly rare (as compared to San Salvador at least!) so it definitely got our attention. The Bible School was held at an 'hostal' about an hour outside Quito, and it was the perfect size - we had it all to ourselves! Within the walls we enjoyed nicely appointed rooms, a spacious meeting room, a freezing cold pool and a small soccer field which probably got more use than any other area!

In our adult studies we focused on the book of Ephesians, and over the course of 10 classes highlighted just a few of the many lessons in Paul's tremendously rich letter to an ecclesia not much different than ours down there. The children and teens had classes of their own, and on the last night we had the now traditional plays - of the adults for the benefit of the children! During the first few Bible Schools we had more typical evening presentations, with skits and songs from the kids, but starting a few years ago the youth teachers turned the tables on us and for a few years now it's been the other way around. At least when you're watching the adults in their plays, you don't have to hold back on your laughter!

We attend a North American Bible school each year with our family and we were beyond delighted to experience the same feelings with the brethren and sisters of Quito. Each morning we awoke excited to meet the day, spending time in God's word, sharing concerns, life problems and situations and looking for Godly input. It was absolutely invaluable for the ecclesia, there is no other time that they get to be together like this. Constraints of work schedules, finances and family obligations make it difficult for everyone to be in one spot at one time, however, most of the ecclesia members were able to get this holiday weekend off. We were only missing a few members who due to health and work obligations were not able to attend. If we could have captured that weekend and bottled it up to savour now and then, we would have. We and our children felt it was a peek at kingdom life: true fellowship and a loving, trusting, joyful and peaceful celebration of our faith and hope.

We are grateful for the blessing of our Heavenly Father, and the support we received from many people, that allowed us to return to a place that has had such a tremendous impact on our lives and our family. Hopefully our service and encouragement to the ecclesia will strengthen and encourage them as they walk in Christ's path towards our Father's kingdom. If you are ever able to visit, please do, the ecclesia there would welcome you as family in Christ. Ecuador is not often a stop over for the majority of us, so in planning a vacation spot, make it a vacation dedicated



to God and go and visit. Break bread, do the readings, share a meal and don't worry about not speaking Spanish fluently, make an effort with what you have and show Christ's love and they in turn will show you what it is to be a part of an international family and body of Christ.

Since arriving home we have been in frequent communication with our Quito family. Our kids miss their Sunday School teachers - their *tias* and *tios*, and miss the children in the Sunday School with whom they played and shared God's word. We miss the regular Bible study classes, being so much a part of something so special each and every week. We miss sharing life experiences and trying to find God's direction as spouses, parents and family in Christ. We miss the wonderment of teaching and studying with newcomers who have found that beautiful pearl that has changed their lives. We miss the warm greetings, tight embraces and warm interest, care and concern amongst the group.

We thank God for our family of faith and perseverance in Ecuador, and ask that God bless and care for them on their journey to His kingdom.

Submitted by Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter



## Kidnapping of Bro. Alex Andrade

We regret to inform that there has been no further development in the case of Bro. Alex Andrade of El Salvador, who was kidnapped in the city of San Salvador on March 6th last. Our fervent prayer is that our Heavenly Father may protect Bro. Alex if he remains alive, while continuing to console his family and his brethren and sisters in the Truth. Given the time that has gone by, the CBMA will not publish any further bulletins on this distressing situation unless some new information were to arise.

## North to Alaska!



It's less than a week until 72 year-old Bro. Stan Wilkinson gets on his bike and heads north to Alaska! Stan is attempting this crazy trip in an effort to help raise money for the Bible Mission. If you would like to track his progress or make a pledge to encourage Stan along the way and support CBMA preaching projects, please visit <http://www.cbma.net/help/north-to-alaska/>.



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