

Youth and a New Church Arise

30.11.13



In this Thanksgiving season we are awash with gratitude. We are grateful to have the good fortune to serve here, and honored to ensure that donors' gifts are maximally stretched and wisely invested.



Young adults affiliated with the local Methodist church recently asked if the mission could help sponsor a youth "Olympiad" and a retreat. The new national Youth Director planned the Olympiad as a way for young adult Methodists to compete in sporting events, get to know each other, and share ideas.



Using a \$150 mission grant, more than 40 young adults from the Copa Peninsula attended the three-day event in La Paz. They came home brimming with enthusiasm and toting two giant



trophies. Among hundreds of competitors from all over Bolivia, our gang won the 10 km race, and both the men's futbol (soccer) and women's futsal (smaller field soccer) tournaments.

The retreat, hosted by local young adults and supported by a \$140 mission grant, was at the church near our house. Jeff and I helped cook two breakfasts, three lunches and two dinners for over 100 attendees. The two speakers talked about personal relationships and sex education – important everywhere, especially here, where the crude birthrate is over 30 percent. Nationally, Bolivians under the age of 15 make up 36 percent of the population, and violence against women is a growing concern.



The Olympiad and the retreat, which included an afternoon of soccer games at our *zona's conchita*, really helped galvanize the young adults. They want our help to launch a new Wednesday night worship service. They'd like to meet at different locations every week to ease and share the burden of travel. They'd like to help plan the message, choose the music, and limit the service to just one hour, all in Spanish.



Jeff and I would love that! Traditional worship services start anytime between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. They include 12 to 20 songs, usually sung twice in Aymara and twice in Spanish. Readings and the sermon are in both languages. Prayers for confession, forgiveness, and healing each run at least 10 minutes, and always include kneeling and weeping. Most church-goers are 40 to 80 years old.



The young folks would prefer shorter, more upbeat, relevant-to-their-lives services. Church leaders, who are older, rather resent that the young ones don't attend traditional services, so they're loathe to indulge the request. Jeff and I consider that the five churches and three church plants are *blessed* to have more than 100 interested, enthusiastic young adults who *want* to be active in their churches. We'll be investing more time and money – and some leader education – in this promising new development!

Roofing and Blessing the Huacuyo Church



Last week more than 50 volunteers built 17 colossal roof trusses and put a metal roof on the new *Nueva Esperanza* (New Hope) Church in nearby Huacuyo Valley. This is a momentous event: it's the first new church in this region in more than 20 years! Now that it's roofed, it can be used. The "floor" of dirt and grass, the absence of doors and windows, and the occasional bird flying through don't concern the members. Now that the roof is on, they consider everything else "*obra fina*," fine work, minor details.





We and the local folks are mighty proud of the new church, and we hope our donors are, too. The church is 10 by 28 meters, about 3,000 square feet including the entry vestibule, at a cost to date of less than \$6,000 to the mission. We figure the floor, windows, doors and interior walls will cost an additional \$6,000.

Church folks like to point out that another new church 40 miles away is smaller, has a smaller congregation, and cost quite a bit more! They are so proud that their own hard work saved so much money! And wow: they *own* their church!



The last nails were pounded in for the roof ridge cap during the start of a four-hour service, followed by a 90-minute ceremony in which pastors, church and community leaders, the three *maestros* (master builders), and we were called on to speak. As always, we reminded attendees that we're merely coordinators and administrators; the money comes from our generous donors.





To show their gratitude, church members showered us with gifts: a hand-woven poncho, a hand-knit *gorro* (hat), a woven coca bag and an alpaca sweater for Jeff; a hand-woven *aguayo* (blanket), two alpaca *mantas* (shawls), and a purse for me; baskets of *p'asanqalla* (slightly sweet, giant puffed corn), and leis of *kantuta* blossoms and *p'asanqalla* for both of us -- all presented with tearful gratitude and bucketsful of rose petals heaped on our heads.



The *maestros* had figured that roofing the church would require two weeks of hard work. But so many volunteers showed up it took just seven days. So instead of charging the mission 5,000 Bs. as we'd budgeted, they felt 2,100 Bs. – a total of \$300 was fair. That's \$100 each, or less than \$15 per day for each master builder!



Again, we revel in the beauty and spirit of Thanksgiving 2013. Thanks to our donors' generosity, the mission has invested in a lot of good work, making money go great distances, and helping local indigenous people build better lives for themselves and their families. Congratulations, blessings, and thanks!





Please remember that on **Tuesday, Dec. 3**, every electronic donation made to Mision Frontera will be **doubled!** Please go to <http://www.umcmision.org/Give-to-Mission/Search-for-Projects/Projects/3021288>, and click the big red **“GIVE NOW”** button. Thank you again for your support!

With love and gratitude, Deb and Jeff