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The Tarasco Christmas Celebration

¡Saludos!

Thank you everyone for your patience as I get this newsletter out to you. December ended with much celebration and traveling as I wrapped up my time in Mexico City, flew home for Christmas, and then left again 83 hours later for my GSI training in Thailand and Myanmar. This newsletter will focus on Mexico City, and the next one will be about the GSI.

I know that the question is on everyone's mind : is Alex going back to Mexico? I also am asking myself that question. It is quite a process. This week the debriefing will start, in which the Latin America Area Director Dr. Delia, the Free Methodist World Missions VISA Department, Pastor Hector, and I talk about how things went while I was in Mexico, and how I might fit into the strategic objectives that the denomination has for the city. Sometime before February, Dr. Delia will decide whether or not to extend to me an invitation to return. I am praying and meditating on whether I would accept the invitation or not- I want to go back but must consider if my personal, spiritual and occupational gifts are best used there or in some other capacity. I expect to know whether I'm going back or not in early February.

I left on a great note. Pastor Hector, his son and I had the chance to enjoy ourselves with a bike ride. At the last youth group meeting, two new girls came for the first time since I had arrived, and I finally got to speak on the problem of pain. Since it was my last week, we celebrated with cake, the "Uno" card game, and "ponche," a home-made fall cider that contains guavas, apples, sugar cane, cinnamon, plums, the hibiscus flower, and more! That day we also threw a Christmas party for the Tarasco kids (see the October newsletter). The next day we had a big Christmas service in which many very talented church members performed skits, played songs, and told stories.

The career missionary Gary Allen wrote me the other day and shared about the impact my legacy is still having on the

Prayer Requests:

Thank you for your prayers! Please pray for:

- Carlos: That he would continue to grow in his faith and find someone who can disciple him while I am gone and if I don't return.
- Missionaries Gary & Jann Allen, with whom I worked closely while in Mexico. Jann has been suffering the past few months from weakness and partial blindness due to a recent diabetes diagnosis. Please pray that God would continue to heal her body so that they can devote themselves more fully to the ministry. Doctors are hopeful for a full recovery, but cannot make guarantees.
- My direction and next steps

At the farmer's market: Me, Carlos, and Diego, Carlos' hard-working employee.

congregation- so encouraging!

Previously I asked you to pray about my friend David taking a leadership role with the youth. He has been a great friend and help to me but it's become clear that at this time he is not the best fit. Thank you, because this is the answer to your prayers. I pray that the right person would come forward.

As I reflect on all of my time in Mexico, there are very many sweet memories. I will say that my favorite part of this experience has been the rich blessing of all of the friendships I've made. Let me tell you about Carlos! In previous newsletters I wrote about the friendships I had been building in the farmers market that appears in front of the church on Thursdays. With time I came to know Carlos, who is in charge of the entire farmers market, and five others as well! We became close friends and his interest in spiritual matters became apparent. Together we have studied many different passages and talked about various topics, such as how one is saved. With all sincerity he told me that the Bible I gave him is the best gift he has ever received. He came to the Christmas celebration on my last night in Mexico and bade me a tearful goodbye. Carlos tells me that he has assurance of his salvation, but he still needs a mature Christian to disciple him. In mission circles he is what is known as a "person of peace" (Luke 10:6). A person of peace is a respected and influential community leader who is open to the Gospel. These people are the key players in disciple-making movements.

The Christmas Celebration at Casa de Celebración (the church "House of Salvation"). We had many visitors!

I thank all of your for all of your prayers and financial support. This was all made possible, in part, by you. Thank you! Above all I thank God for giving this marvelous opportunity.

Take care, and God bless.

Alex Larkin