

SHALOM NEWSLETTER

THE MELGAR'S

2nd Issue: May 2020



GREETINGS!

Thank you for being a partner in the ministry of Jose & April. We are excited to be sending our second newsletter. In this edition, we have focused on delivering more details regarding the two-week Christmas Jose and April hosted at the Orphanage in January. Praise God for His blessings through Jose & April's ministry!



Message from April

The last few months have included some pretty high highs and some of the lowest lows of my life. Promises from government officials that we would have the children for Christmas followed by repeated instances of workers not presenting papers to the judge and being told we would get the children a few days later, and then I was in tears on Christmas Eve when the judge's ruling came through that we would not receive the children for Christmas at all. We were so excited when we finally received children in the home. We had asked for 7 boys and surprise, surprise - we received four boys and four girls... eight in all.

The call came at 1:30 that we could have the children if we could get there, sign the papers and pick the children up before 3:00. We rushed to let the parents know that they needed to be ready as we hurried off to sign papers and pick up eight excited children. Emotions were high... especially when they found out that they were going to get Christmas in January! Upon arriving at the houses and deciding who would sleep in which bunk, the children decorated Christmas trees and received presents and so began eleven very intense days.

It was heartbreaking to hear these kids tell their stories of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. One of the girl's shared how her adult brother would abuse her sexually when she was five, six, seven years old, and how she was beaten when she told her mother. A couple of the boys had serious anger issues and at the slightest perceived provocation would just fly off the handle in a blind rage. After one incident I asked one of the boy's who he was really angry at deep down. He said "My Dad... because he always hit my Mom" We talked about forgiveness and how he needed to let go of his anger. That day he received Jesus as his Saviour. We talked about how he should take a deep breath, count to 30 and then pray the next time he felt like getting angry. A few days later another boy whipped him with an extension cord and he ran away to his room, shaking and trembling in anger - but he didn't retaliate! We talked about how even though it was sad that the boy hit him, how proud I was of him for not fighting back, how it showed that God was really working in his life. He was really proud of himself too and determined to continue changing to become more like God..... SEE PAGE 2



PRAISES AND UPDATES

These children had been through a lot of hurt and pain. Not only in their own homes but also in the state home where they can be beaten and locked in empty prison cells for punishment. You couldn't turn your back or let your guard down with these children, especially the boys. They were a tough group but at the same time, they were so sweet and affectionate and won our hearts so quickly. That only made taking them back to the state home even harder. All the kids begged to stay with us and live in the orphanage. And according to the Childrens' Defense, these are some of the children they plan to send us long-term once all the details are worked out.

The parents we had for the home decided during those eleven days that the work was too physically demanding for the mother and decided not to be house parents. I must say that during those weeks after returning the children and knowing that even if we got the approval from the judge we couldn't receive the children because we had no parents to look after them, I felt more discouraged than I ever have before. Then we got Covid to top it off. However, the same day that we were diagnosed with Covid we also received news of a pastor and his wife in Santa Cruz who are considering coming to serve as parents for one of the homes. We don't even know their names, and we don't know for sure, but we ask you to pray with us to know if it is the Lord's will for this couple to raise children here in Shalom Home. It was a much-needed encouragement for us. Pray that we find the right parents and receive these eight children and many more into a home where they will experience God's love every day.



"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"
3 John 1:4 NKJV

HOUSE PARENTS UPDATE:

As identified in our previous communications, one of the biggest prayer requests we have is the need for God to provide House Parents for both the Boy's and the Girl's homes. We wanted to share with you more information so that you can better understand and pray for this need.

The House Parents will play a vital role in the ministry as the children arrive permanently. They will be living in the House directly, with up to 12 children, and due to their direct contact with the children will be a primary source in the daily ministry that the children will receive. The homes are built so that if the House Parents have a family of their own, they will also be able to live in the house as well.

We will be asking a lot of the House Parents, including:

- Daily interact and live with the children who are sent to the Orphanage.
- They will be the most present representatives of the Orphanage ministry and daily, in all things, need to display the love of the Lord in their actions and to demonstrate to the children that they are loved by God.
- They will need to identify and correct behaviour issues and counsel the children. We anticipated this will be a big challenge, but this was reinforced in the short period of time the children were at the Orphanage in January. We will be receiving children scarred by experiences that we cannot imagine. The love of the House Parents, the community, Jose & April, and most importantly God will be the only thing able to begin to allow them to move past their early life experiences.
- They will need to help the children with their schooling. We anticipate this will be very difficult at first as many will not have been attending school, either regularly or seriously, before they arrive at the Orphanage.
- This role will be a lived-out 24-7 experience and require mature and loving Christian people or families who are deeply committed to making a difference in the lives of these children.

Now while the ask is great, we will be providing them with many items that are not provided by many employers. They will receive regular monthly payments. In addition, their food and living costs will be covered as part of their agreement. The house fathers will also be brought in to help with the Water Plant and other areas of the ministry, based upon their background and skills.

The Orphanage houses are among the nicest in the community and will represent an upgrade in living accommodations compared to the experience of most in the community. So overall, the demands on the House Parents will be great but they will be supported by a strong process, training, the community around them and ultimately Jose & April. Jose & April will oversee and be part of the work on a regular basis. The candidates that God will send us will need a big heart, much patience and much love for the children. We pray that God reveals His will for those who He has prepared for this role in His time.



COVID-19 UPDATE

As many of you know, the Melgar family was impacted by Covid-19 in March and April. Jose was most affected, but the rest of the family also experienced symptoms. Aside from Janessa and Grace, everyone tested positive for the virus but April is pretty certain they too were impacted.

We can thankfully say that the family is pretty much fully recovered at this stage. Jose remains the furthest from normal, but that simply reflects he suffered by far the most serious case. He was in the hospital for over two weeks and its impact upon him was substantial. We are thankful for all those who prayed for the family, for the doctors who looked after his care, and for God for providing the healing.

The Melgar family was not alone as most of their village (close to 100%) and a large number in the city of Cobija had a large wave of new infections during this time. As a result, their health care resources have been extremely strained. Jose was released while still recovering, but it was moreso prompted at the time as he was no longer seen as "sick enough" to take up a hospital bed. There were many more in much worse shape than he was at that time.

While we have been challenged here in Canada, they have had to deal with many of the same issues, only without many of the resources that we take for granted here. We ask your prayer for the people of Bolivia, their leaders, and their healthcare system while they continue to battle the pandemic.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Full recovery for the Melgar Family
- For the health of the community and Cobija during the Pandemic
- The children
- House Parents
- For God's direction on Jose & Aprils next furlough

Thank you for your prayers in this need and others!