

# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



February 2021

Dear praying friends,

It is with great joy that we communicate to you some of the things our Lord has done over the past couple of months. Because there hasn't yet been a second wave to the Pandemic, we have had greater freedom to share Christ with others, minister to other believers, and take care of our own children.

The Lord continues to open doors when it comes to evangelism. I have been keeping a goal of witnessing to an average of two souls per day, during the year. Even though I haven't seen any professions of faith yet, people (for the most part) listen to the message. We are grateful that the Lord allows us to do our part in the Great Commission. Two other members of the church, seeing that I've been witnessing to others, have asked me for tracts, and they go out on their own to witness for Christ. In fact, one of these brothers has been able to witness to the mayor of the city he works for! Please pray that, even if there aren't many visible results, that we would not give up, and take satisfaction in knowing that we are doing what pleases the Lord.

In our last letter, we asked you to pray for Miguel Zaldana (17 years old). He has been coming to our church for many years, and we are finally seeing in him a desire to grow in the Lord. I have been meeting with him once a week to try to mentor and guide him. He is in his final year of high school, and he has no solid idea as to what he is going to do in the future. His mother says that Miguel has been a great source of encouragement for her lately. From previous experiences, we know that it is a difficult thing to mentor 17-year-olds, as they can easily be influenced by the world. Please pray that God's Word would take great root in his life, and that His will be accomplished in Miguel.

Later this month, we will be going to San Miguel to visit Tabernaculo Bautista (the church we had the privilege of serving in from 2006-2008). They are celebrating their 48th anniversary, and their pastor invited me to preach. This is the first time that we will be able to go since the Pandemic started. Please pray that we have a safe trip, and that we can be a blessing to this precious church. As a result of Missionary Bob Green starting this church back in 1973, dozens of churches have been established in San Miguel and the eastern part of El Salvador. Our prayer has always been that the Lord establishes churches in a similar way here in western El Salvador.

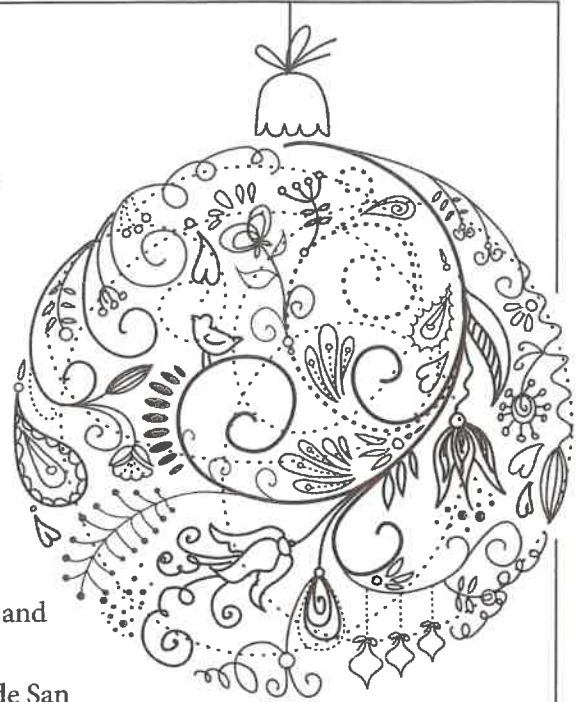
We thank you for your continued prayers for our family. As normal life has changed for most of you, it has also changed for our children. School is completely online, and all sports are still on hold. It has been a challenge to find ways for our children to be well rounded with the regulations a Pandemic brings. The advantage to this problem is we have become even more involved in every aspect of our kid's lives. While there are obvious challenges, we continue to become closer to them. Please pray that we can help our children continue to adapt to a new way of life.

Yours in Christ,

Steve Cerna

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# Merry Christmas



December 2023

Dear praying friends,

As we get ready to end the year, we are overwhelmed with gratitude toward our Lord. God has continued to show Himself faithful and strong on our behalf. He has allowed us to minister to another church, used us to train a laborer within our church, opened doors to witness to many people, and continues to take care of our family.

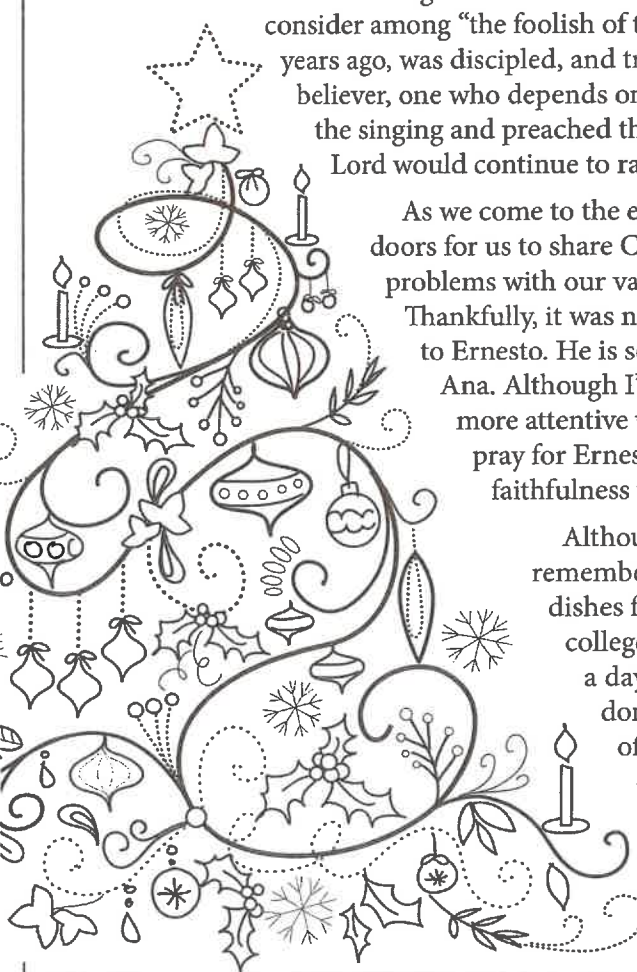
Just this past weekend, I was invited to preach at Tabernaculo Bautista de San Miguel. This is the church we worked with our first two years (2006-2008) in El Salvador. They were having a special event with preaching and workshops. The church asked me to preach the Bible perspective (truth) on gender distinctions. Even here in El Salvador, we are being bombarded by the world's perspective (confusion) about gender and relationships. By God's grace, I ended up preaching four times, starting from Genesis 3. I had a blessed time with my brothers and sisters in San Miguel. As always, I left feeling more ministered to than what I, in God's strength, could minister to them.

It is always a blessing to see how God raises up laborers. As I left for San Miguel. One of the men in our church was left in charge of the service here in Santa Ana. Rolando Pacheco is someone that many would consider among "the foolish of this world (1 Cor. 1:27)." However, he was led to Christ about 12 years ago, was discipled, and trained in our Bible Institute. The Lord has turned him into a faithful believer, one who depends on God as he recognizes his weaknesses. This past Sunday, Rolando led the singing and preached the sermon. Please pray for strength for Brother Rolando. Pray that the Lord would continue to raise up laborers for His glory.

As we come to the end of the year, we are thankful to the Lord for continually opening doors for us to share Christ with people. Before going to San Miguel, we were having problems with our van. So, I called the mechanic (Ernesto) to come fix the problem. Thankfully, it was not serious. At the same time, I used this as an opportunity to witness to Ernesto. He is someone I've known since about the beginning of our time in Santa Ana. Although I've witnessed to him several times before, I could sense that he was more attentive than ever. Part of this is because his wife is about to give birth. Please pray for Ernesto's salvation, and for the Lord to continue to give us the strength and faithfulness to witness to people as long as He wants us here.

Although Thanksgiving is not celebrated in El Salvador, we make sure we remember this important holiday. Christine finds ways to make traditional dishes from scratch. We enjoy time as a family. Even though Rosa is away at college, we have video calls with her throughout the day. We give the boys a day off from school to focus on how grateful we are for all that God has done for us. While sharing what we are thankful for, we noticed that each of us thanked God for His provision for our family. We are thankful for each of you and your faithful support. We pray God's richest blessings on you as you celebrate our Savior's birth.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas



# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



October 2022

Dear praying friends,

With much thankfulness, we can share with you some of the things that the Lord has done for us, and through us, the last couple of months. God continues to open doors for us to share the Gospel with our friends and neighbors, and to minister to some church members. We are also thankful for God's protection of our family.

The last four months have been a challenge, as I've walked around my neighborhood (5 times per week) with the purpose of sharing Christ. By doing this, I can witness to an average of about 7 people each week. The Lord is opening doors for me to make friends with many neighbors. I make it a point to write down their names, to pray for them every day. The list has close to 100 names already, and it keeps growing. Just this past week, I was able to witness to one of the security guards (Raul) who works close to my house. Please pray that the Lord continues to give me the boldness to approach people, and that he brings conviction to these lost souls.

It is a shame that, many times, we focus on negative events to the neglect of some miraculous things the Lord is doing. Rolando Pacheco has been a faithful member in our church for about 10 years now. The Lord has given us the privilege of not only leading him to Christ but, discipling, and training him as well. He graduated from our Bible Institute about 3 years ago. Shy and soft-spoken, he is not someone you would think of as having great potential to serve the Lord. Yet, he has been extremely faithful for 10 years! He used to worry so much about things, that it would make him physically ill. Now, because of God's Word in his life, he has been set free from this issue. Please pray for him as he will be preaching in our church next month.

Also, please pray for Miguel (19-year-old college student). I've been mentoring him over the past several months, begging God that His Word would be the most important thing in his life. He has been faithfully meeting with me every week to study God's Word. I certainly understand the pressures of college, and the temptation to neglect God's will.

Another teenager in our church, named Natasha, has been on our hearts. Her family is going through a difficult time. As a result, they have not been coming to church. She has been a part of our church since she was four years old. In recent years, she has come across as apathetic at church. We have noticed this change in her countenance. As the situation with her family became worse, she reached out to Christine. She thanked Christine for investing in her life and apologized for some behavior issues. She said she wished she could go back to those times of family worship at church. She reached out, apologized, and recognized things when the adults in her life did not. This fourteen-year-old girl has brought us encouragement. Please pray as Christine meets with her, and ministers to her. Pray Natasha will go against the tide and live for God. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support.

The Cernas

# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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August 2022

Dear Praying friends,

As always, we are grateful to God for many things. In Exodus 23:20, God promises to Israel (and to us) that He would go before them, protecting them along the way, and ultimately taking them to Canaan (the abundant life in Christ). Even though the enemy does his best to discourage us, to try to lead us to quit, we are ever excited about God's promises. He has us where He wants us, and (according to John 15:16) this will lead to bringing forth fruit.

In our last prayer letter, I mentioned how I've been walking around my neighborhood (for about 30 minutes, five times per week) with the hope of witnessing to others for Christ. Just this past week has been a huge blessing. The last five times I have gone out, the Lord has allowed me to share the Gospel with someone. In many cases, the people are open to hearing. On average, I'll spend about 10-15 minutes preaching Christ to them. The door is clearly open for people to hear the message of salvation. Please pray that I could continue to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance and that He would bring conviction to the lost.

By God's grace, I continue to meet with Miguel Zaldana about once a week. He is the young man who, aside from being the first in his family to go to college, wants to be faithful to God. He was able to complete successfully his first semester. His example seems to be touching the hearts of his brothers (Luis and David). In fact, Luis has been coming more faithfully to church as of late. Even David has come a couple of times also.

The Zaldana family has been part of our church for about ten years. When their father was killed (in San Miguel) ten years ago, they decided to move to Santa Ana. The mother (Rina) has also expressed a desire to be more faithful to the Lord. She has been meeting with Christine about once every two weeks for advice and encouragement. In fact, the last time they met, Rina brought along Michelle (the mother of David's baby) with her. Please pray for this family, and for us (in having wisdom and patience to minister to them). They have faced much adversity, and they have made many mistakes. However, we can see that the Lord has His hand on them, and He'll finish what He started in them.

During the Pandemic, we switched our kids to the American school schedule and began homeschooling. This means that on August 2, Rosa began her senior year, Caleb began eighth grade, and Joshua began sixth grade. As we mentioned in a previous letter, Rosa spent the summer working in the States. She will be back with us in El Salvador on August 26, and we couldn't be more excited. Please pray for her as she decides on a college for next fall. Please pray that this is a good school year for all three of our kids. We thank you for your prayers for our family and ministry.

Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



June 2022

Dear praying friends,

Since our last prayer letter, the Lord has multiplied the reasons to be thankful for Him. Our trip to the States was a blessed success, we are content upon our return despite normal difficulties, and God continues to give us grace and wisdom in the raising of our children.

At the end of April, Christine and I were able to go to our BIMi field conference in Talladega, Alabama. We were blessed to see many of our fellow missionary friends from Central America, and were challenged by preaching from Bro. David Snyder (BIMi general director), and Bro. Jeff Amsbaugh. The first few days of May we went to visit Pensacola Christian College, as Rosa is considering enrolling there for next year. We are always amazed to see how God always provides for these kinds of activities. Many times we return home with more than what we had when we arrived!

It is always a challenge to return home after a trip to the States. Our spiritual enemy has been attacking us, and many of our church members. It is extremely difficult to learn to wait on His promises. Obviously, discouragement comes easily if we only look at the circumstances. At the same time, it is encouraging to see some of them show the spiritual maturity of not giving up under difficulties. Please pray that Christine and I would be examples of faith, and that we would continue to encourage ourselves in the Lord so that we could encourage others. We have no doubt in our hearts that, as these believers grow, we will start seeing more fruit that remains.

Over the past few weeks, the Lord has placed on me an increasing burden for my neighbors. In fact, I have a list of dozens of them that I pray for every day. A great majority of them have heard the Gospel from me over the years. However, just recently I have decided to go out for a walk every day in my neighborhood. It is good exercise but, more than this, I pray that God will open doors for me to be more friendly to my neighbors, and witness to them. I'm thankful to say that I have been able to share Christ with some of my neighbors recently. Please pray that the Lord would break down the walls of unbelief in the hearts and minds of the people we live close to.

Summer break is officially in full swing at the Cerna House. Caleb has finished the seventh grade and Joshua has finished the fifth grade. They are both excited for summer vacation. Instead of returning to El Salvador with us, Rosa had the opportunity to work a summer job in the States. She is living with Christine's sister and her family, learning how to navigate life in the States. We are happy to report that she is enjoying her job, she is adjusting well, and her eyes are set on attending college next fall. While we are anxious for her return to El Salvador, we are thankful for our extended family that has taken her in as their own. Thank you for your continued support, prayers, and encouragement for our ministry and our family.

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



April 2022

Dear praying friends,

It is with great joy that we can share with you how the Lord has manifested Himself in our lives. Over the past couple of months we have seen the Lord open doors to witness to people, touch the hearts of believers to grow spiritually, and provide for our needs.

Since January, I have been taking our boys (Joshua and Caleb) to basketball practice. We usually go to the park Monday and Friday from 7pm-9pm. I have noticed that many of the parents that take their kids to practice are from the upper middle-class. For several months, my prayer has been for the Lord to use me to make friends with people that normally would not give a Christian the time of day. Thankfully, God has been answering prayers, and I've had the chance to share the Gospel with several parents. Please pray that the Lord would open the hearts of Fernando, Manuel, and Armando. Please also pray that the Lord would continue to give me wisdom, love and boldness in my witness of Christ to people.

The Lord has also allowed me to visit a childhood friend named Martin. He has been struggling with diabetes to such a point that he is recovering from two amputated toes. I have been visiting him the last couple of weeks, praying to not only be an encouragement to him, but also share Christ with him. When people have been so immersed in Catholicism, many times they know what to say when asked questions about the Bible and salvation. It is very difficult to witness to people like this, but obviously not impossible. Please pray that as I visit him, that he wouldn't look at me as a Baptist preacher (but as someone who believes the Word of God), that God's Word would be exalted, and that Martin and his family would come to know Christ as Savior.

In our last letter, we asked for you to pray for Miguel and Jose. By God's grace, Miguel continues to meet with me every week. We are currently studying the book of Hebrews, and are focused on growing spiritually. As far as Jose is concerned, God has given him a new job that has him away during the work week. When he comes to church on Sunday, he tells me how burdened he is for the town he is working in, and how the Lord has opened doors for him to witness for Christ. In fact, a couple of weeks ago, God used Jose to convict me of my need to be more dependent on God in my witness for Christ. This is a great reason why we have seen open doors at basketball practice! It is such a blessing when God allows us to learn great lessons, especially from our own converts. Praise God!

As I'm writing this letter, we are getting ready to visit the States. The last week of April, Christine and I will attend our BIMi field conference in Alabama. It will be a time of encouragement, as we meet with our fellow BIMi missionaries from Latin America. During the first week of May, we are planning to take our daughter Rosa to visit a Christian college, that she has been considering. We can't believe that next year, if the Lord permits, we will be dropping her off to college. Please pray for traveling mercies. We are always humbled by how the Lord always supplies our needs. This trip has been no exception. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support. Your missionaries in Christ,

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



February 2022

Dear praying friends,

It is with gratefulness that we begin the new year, excited about the opportunities for ministry that the Lord has already given to us.

We have mentioned Jose in the past, asking you to pray for his spiritual growth. We are happy to share that we have seen great spiritual growth in his life over the past few months. He has been asking Steve a lot of questions about evangelism and discipleship. Steve has had the opportunity to mentor him over the past few years. Jose has recently begun to bring his brother-in-law, Ronny, to church with him. Ronny has a traditional religious (Catholic) background that has influenced many decisions in his life. The fact that he has been coming to a Baptist church with Jose is a miracle in of itself. Steve has been very careful to show Ronny his need for a Savior, not a religion. His need for repentance and true trust in Jesus for salvation, not in a church. Please pray for Ronny's salvation, and for Jose and Steve as they witness to him.

Miguel, the young man in our church that we have asked you to pray for, is about to begin classes at the public university. Less than 10% of those who apply end up enrolling, and Miguel was the only one in his high school class to be accepted. Over the past year, Miguel has seen the correlation of seeking God, trusting in Him, and being blessed. He meets with Steve weekly to discuss what is on his heart. Please pray for Miguel as he begins a new step in his life. Pray he can be a witness in college, and bring many friends to Christ.

In early February, we had the opportunity to return to San Miguel, the city where we lived for two years at the beginning of our time in El Salvador. We were invited to the wedding of a dear family that was instrumental in helping us establish the church in Santa Ana. Unbeknownst to us, both pastors of the church were sick with Covid, and Steve would be needed to perform the ceremony at the last minute. We thank God that Steve was able to officiate the wedding. He was also asked to preach the three Sunday services the next day. It was a great opportunity for Steve to share messages on trusting in God, and having greater levels of faith.

While we have no regrets about our trip to San Miguel, we did all become sick with Covid about a week after returning to our city. Please pray for our health. We are all recovering and are grateful that the sickness was not severe. However, we are still dealing with some side effects that are causing us to need more rest than normal. Our family is in good spirits and we thank you for your prayers for us. As always, they are greatly needed. Yours in Christ,

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



December 2021

Dear praying friends,

As we finish the year, we reflect on how the Lord has guided us. He has placed us in a position to be blessed, and to be a blessing. If the Lord allows us to reach 2022, we are excited to see how He will provide for our church, open doors for souls to be reached with the Gospel, and give us wisdom as we guide our family and church.

It has been four years since, as a church, we moved out of the building (that we were renting to have services). We did this, not knowing where or how God was going to guide us. To be honest, it has been a longer wait than what we were anticipating. Nevertheless, the Lord has allowed us to weather many storms, save up a good amount of money, and stand firm on His promises. From the beginning, we were leaning on Proverbs 28:8 and 13:22, and on the way that God dealt with Abraham in the book of Genesis. We knew that whatever money we were able to save, in the end God would open a door so that that money would buy at least two or three times more than it would normally buy. In other words, we know that the Lord will open a door for us because we have been waiting (by faith) on Him to give us an Isaac. We decided, long ago, that we are not going to settle for an Ishmael. From walking with God, and meditating His promises, we realize that the time is quickly approaching for us to buy a property. Please pray that that door that God has promised will open soon. It could be that the next time we write to you (February 2022), we are praising God for what He did.

Although there have been some restrictions due to the Pandemic, we were still able to go throughout the city, handing out many tracts, and witnessing to hundreds of people. Although visible fruit is few and far between, Christine and I are as excited as ever to be missionaries in El Salvador. The Lord has raised up a faithful little group of believers, in our church, who are also excited about serving. Just as with the property, we are not going to settle for anything less than God's promises. In Mark 1:17 our Lord says, "come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." We take that as a promise. We know that we are coming after (following) the Lord, so we can expect that (one way or another) we will become better, and more effective fishers of men. Once again, please pray that the Lord would fulfill His promises. These are exciting times to be in El Salvador indeed. When we have God's promises, we truly need nothing else.

We are in a new stage of parenting. We have another licensed driver in the house! Over the summer, Rosa spent a number of months in the States with family so that she could learn how to drive. She passed her driving test and is so excited to have her license. We are proud of her, and thank you for all of your prayers for our three children. The boys are also doing well as we continue to homeschool. Rosa is a Junior, and we are praying about college in the next few years. Please pray with us as we help Rosa make this important decision. Thank you for always praying for our family. Without a healthy family life, we would not survive on the mission field. We covet your continual prayers for our family as we enter new stages of parenting. Thank you for your faithfulness. May God bless you as you celebrate the Christmas season.

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



October 2021

Dear praying friends,

It is always with great thankfulness that we inform you of the things the Lord has done in El Salvador over the course of a couple of months. We are happy to say that we just celebrated 13 years as a church in the city of Santa Ana, the Lord has given us more opportunities to support Salvadoran missionaries in other countries, the doors continue to open in witnessing to the lost, and our family is moving forward in our first full year of homeschooling the children.

About two weeks ago, Iglesia Bautista Central de Santa Ana celebrated its 13th anniversary. A pastor friend of ours, Adrian Sandoval, came to preach the service for us. He was encouraged to see that the church continues marching forward, in spite of obstacles. The situation, with the Pandemic, has considerably worsened in the country. Because of this, some have decided to not attend church services until things improve. Obviously, this hasn't just affected our church, but many churches throughout the country. Please pray that the Lord would give us wisdom. We don't want to put anyone at risk, but we don't want to stop having services either.

The Lord has given us the privilege to support quite a few missionaries from El Salvador to other countries. Over the past couple of months, we have been praying for Marvin and Montserrat Ochoa, missionaries to Spain. They are being sent from an independent Baptist church in San Salvador. It has been very difficult for them lately, as they have patiently waited to get permission to enter Spain. By God's grace, they will be going to Spain in early December. Our church has decided to support them regularly. Please pray that we would continue to have a vision for missions, and that the Lord someday would raise up missionaries from our church.

Over the past few months, the Lord has been convicting my heart about more wisdom and dependence on Him for evangelism. We realize the importance of being more spontaneous, and conscious of the lost souls around us. From John 15:16, we realize that we are where we are because the Lord has placed us there. Obviously, there will always be a need to go out looking to reach souls. However, we also realize that (if we pray for it) God will bring souls in our path. This way of evangelism is nothing new to us, but we realize that there is so much room for improvement. Please pray that we would have a greater boldness (and love) to witness to people, as the God-given opportunities arise.

We are thankful for the good health that our family has enjoyed for a number of years. Many of you will remember that Christine struggled greatly with asthma, in the past. She has not had any lung problems for over three years. We cannot explain this, except for God's mercy in our lives. We continue to homeschool our three children. This endeavor certainly has its challenges, but we see the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Thank you for praying for us!

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



August 2021

Dear praying friends,

It is with much praise to our Lord that we write to you this month. Many things have happened since the last time we shared news with you. Our small trip (about three weeks) to the West Coast to visit family, and some supporting churches, was an enormous blessing. We are also thankful for how God continues to guide us as a church, even in the midst of our absence and the global pandemic.

It had been almost 12 years since we had gone to the West Coast. By God's grace, we were able to get together with my parents, sisters and their children. For the first time ever, my parents were able to take a picture with all nine of their grandchildren. I'm thankful that my parents are still with us, and are relatively healthy. We are especially thankful for my sisters Wendy (Connecticut) and Olga (Oregon) who are serving the Lord, and are raising their children in the Lord.

Being on the West Coast, we were able to visit three churches. Two of these churches are particularly special to me because I used to be a member of them. Greater Portland Baptist Church (Portland, OR) is our sending church, and where my mother and Olga are members. Berean Baptist Church (Rohnert Park, CA) is where I was born again (1990), and had the opportunity to serve the Lord for several years. It was such a blessing to catch up with old friends at both of these churches, and to see how God is still graciously carrying them along after all these years. We also had the blessing of visiting Willamette Valley Baptist Church (Oregon), who have faithfully supported us in ministry for over 17 years.

While in the States, we received news that one of the first members of our church here in Santa Ana became ill with Covid. A few days after we came back to El Salvador, the Lord decided to take him to heaven. Gustavo Bonilla rededicated his life to Christ shortly after we met him 13 years ago. He was 65 years old at the time, and had lived outside of God's will for over thirty years. From 1976 to 2008 he lived in the United States. His addiction to alcohol had almost claimed his life in 2005. In 2008 he decided to come back to El Salvador, thinking that he would die shortly after. It was within that month that he came back to El Salvador, and that we moved to Santa Ana, that we met him. Although Gustavo was someone that the world would consider weak and foolish, he became a powerful witness for Christ. Naturally very shy, God gave him the strength to overcome that. In fact, Gustavo became my main evangelism partner, and together we were able to witness to a countless amount of people over the years. He will be greatly missed. However, there are other members that have learned from Gustavo, taking the baton, and are becoming better witnesses for Christ.

Our children greatly enjoyed their time with their cousins. We made the decision to allow Rosa to remain in the States with family for an additional 6 weeks with the idea of preparing her for college in two years. Our hope is that she will slowly become more acclimated to US culture, and start deciding what she would like to do with her future. Please pray for Rosa, as she is learning a lot and thinking about her future. She will return to El Salvador in October. Since we have begun homeschooling, we have switched to the US schedule. This means that the school year starts this week. Pray for us as we begin a new school year with our children. Pray that we will use this opportunity to grow spiritually and intellectually. Once again, thank you for your faithful prayers and support. Yours in Christ,

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



June 2021

Dear praying friends,

With much gratitude to the Lord, we write this letter. These past couple of months have been full of His blessings. We rejoice at how the Lord is able to bring some sheep back into His fold, the open door He has given to us to minister/mentor others, His power in keeping a church together in the midst of obstacles, and His loving hand towards our family.

As preachers of the Gospel, many times we minister to straying sheep. In some cases, the sheep stray so often that we become weary in dealing with them. At the same time, we realize how God is dealing with us, and how He wants us to be patient and merciful. Just recently, I had pretty much given up on one of our church members. By God's grace, as I was meditating from the Book of James, God impressed upon my heart the last two verses of this book. I was reminded that in some cases, as a pastor, I have to take the initiative in restoring others to Christ. So, I decided to send this sheep a text, letting him know how much God loves him, and how he (and his family) can be restored. Amazingly, even though this man was drinking at a bar, he received my text. He let me know that he was tired of straying, and that he wanted God to restore his life. So, I met with him the following day, he rededicated his life to Christ, and has been faithfully coming to church. Please pray for Brother Zaldaña and his family, that they would ultimately be rooted in Christ.

As a result of the Pandemic, and not being able to have physical church services more than once a week, we have needed to get more creative in ministering to people. At this moment, my wife and I have been meeting with several different people per week. In many cases, the objective has been to encourage them in their walk with Christ. In one special case, the unsaved wife of one of our church members has sought advice from Christine. Please pray that God fulfills His will in these precious lives.

It is amazing to consider just how much our country, and the world, has changed over the past 3 ½ years. It was in January 2018 that the Lord led us to stop renting a building in order to save for our own property. Even though we have had church at several different locations, and in different ways, the Lord continues to keep the church together. Even though the temptation has been to get impatient, there is a collective anticipation that God will do something great. Please pray for us as we wait. The housing market has turned more beneficial towards the seller. However, this does not discourage us. God will fulfill His promises no matter what the circumstances.

God's loving hand towards our family has been evident to us in the past months. A Pastor's wife from Florida gave us a surprise three-day visit, mainly to encourage Christine, and deliver some gifts the church had gathered for her. We have not had a visitor from the States in two years, so this was an exciting time for our family. We also see God's hand in the spiritual growth and maturity our daughter has demonstrated over the past months. Please join us in prayer for our sons, that we will see this same spiritual growth in their lives as they get older. Thank you for praying for our family.

The Cernas

# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



April 2021

Dear praying friends,

With much gratefulness we remember and write about some of the things the Lord has been doing over the past couple of months. It seems like God has been opening doors for us to share Christ with others, we are seeing spiritual growth in some believers we have been ministering to, and our children are benefitting from the extra time we are spending with them due to the Pandemic.

Now that the restrictions from the Pandemic have eased up some, I have tried to share Christ with a renewed zeal. Our philosophy of ministry has always been similar to Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Over the course of the first three months of the year, I've had the privilege of sharing Christ with over 200 souls. I'm thankful that, for the most part, people are willing to listen. Even if I don't often see visible fruit, I greatly believe that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." Our expectations of what God is capable of doing with His Word have not changed, and we're thankful that He has given us the grace to continue in His work. Please pray that the Lord blesses with a great harvest, even if we do not end up seeing it in this life.

Thank you so much for praying for Miguel, the young man that I have been mentoring over the last few months. I am still meeting with him once a week, and he has been coming on his own to church services. I've made it a point to encourage him to not only read God's Word, but to seek refuge in His promises. It seems like God's Word is taking root in his life, even when most of the other members of his family are going in the opposite direction. We also asked you to pray for his sister-in-law Verence. By God's grace, she has sought counsel from Christine (they have been meeting regularly). Please pray that the Lord opens her eyes, and that she would be born-again.

The Lord has also been very faithful to us, as we wait for purchasing a church property. Though we have been in this transition for three years, our expectations of what God will do are great. It is relatively easy for an American missionary to come to the field and raise money to build something. In the end, what the nationals learn is to rely on the American missionary. It is not easy to believe His promises, and wait on God. Faith requires us to let God work when there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Faith also requires us to let God work even when we are physically able to find our own solution (kind of like Abraham with Ishmael). God has promised a miracle. We have decided to wait on Him. Please pray that His will is fulfilled, and that our church would learn a great lesson from all of this.

With the changes brought on our family by the Pandemic, we realized that homeschooling would be a good option for our family at this point. Our kids learned Spanish by attending a local school. However, we realize that homeschooling would be more beneficial for them. It has been a challenge but we are all learning a lot. We feel that this gives us an opportunity to help build their character as we are spending a lot of time together and can more easily see weaknesses and strengths in each of our kids. Pray for us as we continue with this new adventure! Thank you for your prayers and support.

Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



December 2020

**Dear Praying Friends,**

**As we approach the end of another year, we cannot help but be thankful for how the Lord has navigated us through it. In fact, we have come to realize that 2020 has been a year in which we have found it quite easy to thank our Lord. It is amazing how much perspective one can gain, in the Lord, when being forced to slow down. In spite of all of the unforeseen circumstances we have faced, God has encouraged us even further about his plans for El Salvador.**

**When the world is so focused on illness and physical ailments, it becomes easy for us Christians to lose focus towards a lost and dying world. Because of the pandemic, there were many limits in our country as far as communicating the Gospel personally. There was a great temptation to grow complacent as a result. In spite of all this, and by God's grace, I was able to witness, on average, to one person per day during the year. We are firm believers in the power of God's Word (Hebrews 4:12). Although God can give us abilities and resources to reach people with the Gospel, these things are not essential. If we go directly to people, and preach to them, there is no limit as to what God can do. In fact, most of the fruit in our church is a result of this. Please keep praying for us to depend on God's Word and Spirit to do His work.**

**In our last letter we wrote to you about how Luis Zaldana rededicated his life to Christ. By God's grace, he continues with his desire to walk with God. We still keep meeting once a week, and are focusing on God's will, and His personal promises to believers (beginning at salvation). We are seeing spiritual growth in him as he applies God's promises to his life. He has avoided being influenced by worldly "friends", and is treating his wife (tenderly) in a way no one expected. Because of what God is doing in Luis' life, it has given us a better opportunity to minister to his brother Miguel (age 17). Please keep praying for the salvation of Luis' wife (Verenice), and that the Lord keep touching the hearts of young men so that we can reactivate the Bible Institute after this pandemic is over.**

**As always, we like to close our prayer letter with news about our family. We are happy to share that our family is doing well. Our children completed the virtual school year at the end of October. They have a break for the months of November and December. Joshua finished the year with A honor roll, Caleb ended the year with AB honor roll, and Rosa finished the year with B honor roll. We are happy (and very relieved!) that this chapter of a challenging year has been closed. Thank you for praying for us as we guide our children. We greatly appreciate your prayers and support.**

**We pray for God's richest blessings as you celebrate Christmas and reflect on God's great love.**

**Steve Cerna**

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



October 2020

Dear praying friends:

With much thankfulness, we are happy to communicate that the quarantine in El Salvador is officially over. God has allowed us to survive this with great enthusiasm for Him, and His work. Obviously, we are better able to minister to our people. Also, God has used the pandemic to bring repentance to some believers that were out of God's will.

About seven years ago, the Lord brought Rina Zaldaña and her four sons from San Miguel to our city of Santa Ana. They left San Miguel because the father (Ernesto) was killed by an extortioner. We knew this family quite well from our time (2006-2008) in San Miguel. Rina has been very involved in our church since she came. However, her two oldest sons (Luis and David) have been out of God's will for many years. We are thankful to tell you that Luis has rededicated his life to Christ. Over the past two months he has stopped drinking, been reconciled with his wife, and he comes to our house once a week to pray and meditate on Scripture. It has been a complete answer to prayer. We also believe that it is only a matter of time before the Lord does the same work in David. Please pray for them, and for Luis' wife (Verenice), who has not yet been born again.

Also, about two months ago, one of our church couples (José and Marlene) who were having marital issues, called me to their house. Marlene hasn't wanted to grow much as a Christian since we've known her. By God's grace they both realized where they were failing in their marriage. So, we all prayed that day, recognizing the importance of God's Word in their lives. Over the past several weeks that I've been following up on them, I have noticed a difference. Their son Mauricio (who is the other pastor of our church) has noticed a difference in them as well. Please pray that their marriage would even be an example to other marriages, especially in the church.

By God's grace, we started having physical services the last four weeks. It has been a great blessing, as the attendance is better now than before the pandemic! There seems to be a renewed spirit within the members as a result of the quarantine. The Lord is bringing in unsaved visitors to the church as a result of some of the members' testimonies. Many of them are naturally sharing Christ with others, even though we hadn't been able to go out evangelizing as a church. Please pray for the Lord to keep opening doors, bringing repentance to both saved and unsaved.

Last prayer letter, we mentioned an unsaved man, Jose, that had Coronavirus. His family came to our first physical service, and shared with us that he was healed from the illness. However, since then, he has suffered many side effects from the virus. As a result, he had gall bladder surgery the following week. We are thankful to report that he has greatly improved since then. Although side effects are still an issue, his family is grateful that he is doing better. Please continue to pray for his salvation.

Our family has never been healthier. Six months of quarantine were very good for our health. We have never had such a long period of time without even a cold. However, we were more than ready to get out of the house and see our church people again. It's been encouraging to see how our kids have grown in quarantine, and how some of our church people have also grown. Although it was not something we would have chosen, we are seeing great results from that difficult time. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support.

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



August 2020

**Dear praying friends:**

**Although quarantine continues (longer than we thought) in El Salvador, the Lord always strengthens and encourages us with what He is doing. We praise God for the doors that He has opened to witness to people, to have services online, and to minister to our church people.**

**While the dates of reopening for churches and businesses have been pushed back, we continue to look for opportunities to witness. We are still able to hand out tracts and witness to people as we run essential errands. It seems as if God is softening people's hearts. It wouldn't surprise us if God eventually opens a huge door. Thank you for your continued prayers on this front.**

**Herlinda received Jesus as her Savior, in our church, a few years ago. Soon after, her two sons followed her decision. This was not an easy decision for any of them. This is because there is a heavy Catholic influence in their family. The father (José) is Catholic, and for a number of years, he forbade the mother and sons to attend church. After meeting us, the father changed his mind, and allowed his family to attend our church. He has attended church on a few special occasions. While he tolerates his family to be Christians, he has stated that he does not want anything to do with Christianity. We have been praying for his salvation for years.**

**This father (José) contracted Coronavirus at work. He works for the government as a security guard. Since he has been sick, we have had the opportunity to minister to his family. We are in contact through messages, and we have dropped off groceries and medicine in a safe way. José sent us a message through his son that he is very grateful for what we have done to help in this difficult time. Of course, our main concern is for his spiritual life. We know that God can use this time to change his heart. Please pray for José, Herlinda, and their sons Douglas and David. Please pray that Herlinda and her sons stay healthy, doing their best to not spread the disease. Most importantly, please pray for the salvation of José.**

**Instead of seeing the obstacles of this pandemic, we are actively looking for the door God will open with regard to buying a church property. It looks like the impact of the pandemic on the economy will make it much easier for us to buy! We are praying that we can be in the right place at the right time to make an offer. Also, please pray that once we are able to have normal church services, that we can do them in a new church property.**

**Our family is going into our sixth month of quarantine. While this has not entirely been a mandatory quarantine, all schools, churches and most businesses are still closed. Our kids feel restless some days, but for the most part, they have done very well. We feel that slowing life down has really given us a chance to learn more about our kids. We understand their personalities even better. We see their strengths, and we are discerning how to better help them in their weaknesses. For this, we are thankful for the quarantine. We have grown as a family. We thank God for our kids, and ask you to please pray for us as we teach them and guide them. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and financial support.**

**The Cernas**

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



June 2020

Dear praying friends,

Although it may seem that not much has happened (because of quarantine) over the last couple of months, the Lord always manages to confirm his presence in our church and family. The quarantine restrictions have been very strict here in El Salvador. However, the Lord still allows us to minister to people, and preach His Gospel. Thankfully, it seems like we have been through the worst, and now, we have an idea of when things will come back to normal.

Since the middle of May, the government has allowed only one person to leave each house (once every four days). Because of this strict quarantine, the number of Coronavirus cases has been kept under control. For the most part, the people have been obedient to the strict rules. So far, after three months, there have been less than 2,000 cases. The number of recoveries from the virus is almost as much as the number of new cases for each day. We are thankful that the virus has not ravaged our country, when we consider what it has done in other countries in Latin America.

Just this week, the government has given a schedule on reopening the country in phases. For us as a family, it means we will be in quarantine until July 7th. What this means for us as a church is that we will be having normal services around the middle of August. It looks like we have two months to buy a property for the church, since it is not feasible to have services in the house we were using previously. We have all the money that we need to purchase a property, and are just praying that the Lord miraculously opens the door for us to begin this next phase of ministry. Please pray that the Lord would multiply what we have, supplying the need as he did for the 5,000 men in John 6.

It is amazing to see that even though we have been in quarantine, God's Word hasn't been (2 Tim. 2:9). We continue to have online services three times per week. By God's Grace, most of our church members have access to the services. The general attitude of the church members has been of excitement in regards to what the Lord will do with our church. In fact, two of our faithful men in our church have been talking about starting an online Bible study for the church members. Please pray for Jose and Mauricio, as they are willing to be used by the Lord to minister His Word.

The Lord has also manifested his presence as I've been out for essential needs. Just this week I got the opportunity to witness to three men as I was at the grocery store and the bank. It would not surprise us if the Lord uses this pandemic to soften the hearts of the people. This country may have the appearance of being "white for the harvest," but the reality is that it is not at all common for a soul to come to faith in Christ. We have been ministering for many years with the expectation that the Lord will open up a door of evangelism (1 Cor.16:9; Rev. 3:8). It could be that the time has come for that to happen.

Our children have been troopers throughout this quarantine. They have not been outside (we have no yard) since March 12, but they have not complained much at all. They have filled their time with reading, puzzles, and quality family time. They seem to understand that this is a situation out of our control, and they are making the best of it. We are thankful for this extended period of quality family time, something that would not have happened under normal circumstances. The school year does not end until October, so it looks like we will finish the school year online. We are praying about schooling options for the 2021 school year. Please pray about this with us, that we would make the best decision for our children's education. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support.

Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



February 2020

Dear praying friends:

It is with great joy that we share with you the blessings of the last couple of months. God continues to give us opportunities with regards to evangelism, He has opened doors for us to teach about missions to a wide variety of people, and He keeps His hand of mercy on our family even in the midst of serious illness.

By God's grace, your prayers are being answered with regard to us sharing the Gospel with others. I try to share Christ with others wherever I go. The Lord allows me to witness to an average of about 13 souls every week, as I'm at the grocery store, bank, paying bills, etc. Of course, this does not include those times we go door-knocking, or park evangelizing, as a church. Not too long ago, I met a young man named Geovany. I had the privilege of witnessing to him. He showed so much interest in the Gospel, that he gave me his phone number, and then asked me for mine. Please pray for this young man who has shown an interest in spiritual things. Also, please pray for us to continue to have the boldness of sharing Christ anywhere, and to have the wisdom to lead souls to Christ, ministering to them according to their need.

Just this past week, I had the privilege of participating in something very special. Tabernáculo Bautista de San Miguel (the church we were members of from 2006-2008) had a missions training conference, along the lines of Camp BIMi in Chattanooga, TN. There were more than 90 students in attendance. Some were pastors, missionaries, young and older members of churches. Not only were there students from the church in San Miguel, but there were many from Honduras, Nicaragua, and even from Guatemala. I had the blessing of working with, and translating for Gerry Baughman (a veteran missionary who founded Camp BIMi). The conference lasted about four days, and much was taught from the Bible with regards to missions. Also, God gave me the opportunity to teach two sessions to these students.

Please pray for the fruit of this conference. The Lord has done so much in this region, with the Gospel, over the past 100 years. However, there is still much to be done. I believe that we have not scratched the surface of what God wants to do here. There is so much potential, not only to establish more churches in the region, but to train and send missionaries throughout the world.

About two weeks before I was scheduled to go to the conference, I contracted Dengue Fever. I have never been as sick I was for nine days. It was a taxing time for my family and our church, and myself. I am grateful that God pulled me through this illness. God gave me a week of rest before I was to teach and preach in San Miguel. After my illness, all three of our kids struggled with different illnesses that were less serious, but did cause them to miss school. Thankfully, at the time of writing this letter, we are all in good health. There is nothing that makes a person grateful for their health like losing that health for a time. We are thanking God that we can continue to serve after a rough start to the new year.

Thank you for your prayers for our family. As you can see, they have helped pull us through illnesses, and a very busy time of ministry right after illness. Thank you for remembering to pray for us and for the church.

Steve Cerna

# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



December 2019

Dear churches and friends:

Over the past several weeks, we have continued to see God's hand of blessing in our lives, and in the lives of many of our church members. We are thankful to report the Lord's faithfulness in keeping us here on the field for another year. If God permits, we are excited about what He will do in our lives in 2020.

It is interesting to see how, many times, things don't turn out like we plan them. The Lord ends up showing us that He has better plans. When we started our transition to buy a property, I did not think that it would take as long (almost two years and counting) as it has. Our greatest desire was to be able to do this in complete dependence on God. Obviously, that is the greatest need, not only for churches in El Salvador, but all over the world. There is no doubt in my mind that if we planned on doing things in our strength and wisdom, we would have something already. However, that kind of way of doing things only creates much more problems than it solves. So we continue to trust in the Lord, and are leaning on Isaiah 30: 15 which says: "...in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength..." Please continue to pray for us. We are very much excited to see what the Lord will do with us.

By God's grace, the morale at the church has been high lately. Last month we celebrated the 11th anniversary of our church. We had a guest preacher (Mario Torres) who came all the way from San Miguel (about 100 miles away) to be a blessing to us. Because we had good weather, we were able to use the park in front of our house for the service. There was a good attendance, and some unsaved people had the chance to hear the Gospel.

This month of December we will be blessed to have Gilberto Orellana preach a service for us. Brother Orellana has been a missionary to Spain since before the year 2000. As a church we have been supporting him, and others, for several years. He has a special ministry of trying to reach Muslims for Christ. The city (Malaga) where he lives has a great influx of African immigrants. We are excited to see him, and his family, as they don't get the opportunity to come back to their native El Salvador very often. Please pray that our church would be more burdened for missions. We are certain that the Lord is not done sending missionaries from El Salvador to the furthest regions of the planet.

Our children finished out the school year, and are now enjoying their longest break from classes. They will be on vacation all of November, December, and the first half of January. Much like summer vacation in the States, we use this period to enjoy extra family time. We spend extra time playing outside, and the kids sleep in. Christine studies American history with the kids since they do not learn this in school. Please pray that we can maximize the short time that we have with them. With each passing school year, we are more aware that this season of life will change. Thank you so much for your prayers and support.

Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



October 2019

Dear churches and friends:

It is with great joy that we are writing to you this month, as we have seen the Lord work in extraordinary ways. God has been faithful in opening doors for service, in giving us miraculous opportunities for discipleship, and in allowing us to take care of our children.

At the end of August, I had the privilege of going to Honduras with Fabricio Bonilla (a Salvadoran pastor friend). We taught a hermeneutics course to a group of about 12 Honduran pastors. The purpose was to be a blessing to them, and give them some tools for ministry. It was such a blessing to see God's work in Honduras. We stayed in Veracruz, Copan (pop. 3,000) in a church that was established about 25 years ago. Out of this church, several churches have been started over the years. I also had the privilege of preaching in a rural church. There were 60 people in attendance, even though the village has a population of about 200! Though I noticed a great difference in the receptivity of God's Word between Hondurans and Salvadorans, I am even more grateful to the Lord for keeping us 13 years in El Salvador. Please pray for further opportunities to minister in Honduras, and that God would touch the Salvadorans with the Gospel in a similar way.

As you already know, about four months ago, one of our faithful members (Ricardo Salguero) was shot and killed while selling bread on his route. By God's grace, we are seeing some fruit from Ricardo's testimony. His uncle (Carlos Salguero), who has an Independent Baptist background, but has been out of God's will for many years, has been attending our church services over the past couple of months. In God's strength, Carlos has stopped drinking alcohol, and smoking cigarettes. He has been faithfully studying the discipleship lessons with me over the past several weeks. Please pray for the rest of Ricardo's family. His brother (Mauricio) and his mother (Mayra) still need to receive Christ as their Savior.

It is also a blessing to inform you of the Bible study that was started in Jose Escobar's home just recently. Some of our church members have been attending, as well as new people from Barrio San Miguelito. Please pray that the Lord would open doors for us to reach people there. We are thankful that God has placed a burden for ministry in the hearts of the church members, as the Bible study is being run without my help.

Our children are finishing their school year this month, and have their break for the months of November and December. They are finishing many big projects and assignments. In fact, Rosa and her friend won the Science Fair for their grade. They worked very hard and showed a great work ethic throughout the project.

Please pray for our kids as they end another school year, and prepare for exams. We are happy it is almost time for a break from school. This is our favorite time of year and we are looking forward to it. We are surprised at how quickly they are growing up. Please continue to keep them in your prayers.

Steve Cerna

# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



April 2019

Dear praying friends:

The Lord continues to “show himself strong (2 Chronicles 16:9)” here in El Salvador. We are honored to report to you “the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20).” God is bringing forth fruit through other members of our church, He continues to encourage us as we wait to buy property for the church, and our family continues to move forward with His wisdom and strength.

By God’s grace, we were able to baptize Ricardo Salguero (20 years old) just recently. This young man has been coming to church for the past 5 years. Although he made a profession of faith at our church, a few years ago, he had been reluctant to grow spiritually until recently. God has used several trials in his life to create a desire in him to learn more about God, and obey Him. Mauricio (our other pastor) has taken him under his wing, teaching him God’s Word through the discipleship course, and baptizing him (Mauricio’s first baptism). In a place like Santa Ana (where the field is not white for the harvest) what we are seeing with these two men is not common. It looks like Mauricio’s father (José), who has been a church member for about four years, is on the verge of discipling someone also. I feel like I get more excited seeing these men (my spiritual children) disciple others, than doing it myself. Please pray that the Lord would continue to open doors. The future of this church depends on what God does with these men.

We are thankful for Pastor Mauricio and his wife Dora. They are expecting their fifth child in June. Please pray that God gives us wisdom in preparing him to be the main steward of the church. Once this happens, we can start focusing on establishing other churches. We don’t know how much more time this is going to take, but we’re thankful that God has us going in the right direction.

About a week ago, Mauricio and I went to a meeting for Salvadoran pastors in La Libertad, El Salvador. About 20 pastors got together for fellowship and testimonies. The pastor of the church we visited told us the story of how they were able to acquire the church property. To make a long story short, they were able to buy a property (that was already somewhat built, and costs more than \$100,000.00) for \$27,000.00. This further confirms our belief that what limits us as Christians is not a lack of resources, but a lack of faith. It would not surprise us, in the least bit, if God does something similar with us. Please pray for us as we wait, placing our eyes on Him.

Our kids have just completed their first quarter of the school year. It is hard for us to believe that Rosa only has four more years before college. She is doing well, and so are the boys. Caleb is playing the piano beautifully, and Joshua is excited for his birthday on Sunday. We ask you to continue praying for us as we strive to raise our children in a way that is Christ honoring. As always, thank you for your faithful prayers and support.

Steve Cerna

# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

February 2019

Dear praying friends:

With much gratitude to our Lord, we communicate to you some of the blessings received so far this year. God is using our church with regards to evangelism and discipleship, greater doors for service are opening, and we are continuing to make progress towards buying a new property for the church.

A couple of weeks ago, Mauricio (the other pastor of our church) went door-knocking with Miguel (one of our faithful teenagers). By God's grace, they led a young lady to Christ. It was such a blessing to see Miguel not only go out evangelizing, but to be excited about seeing someone receive Christ. Please pray for this young man. He is 15 years old. His father was shot to death about six years ago. His mother (Rina) and younger brother (Gabriel) have been faithful to the Lord, but his older brothers (David and Luis) are very much in love with this world. I have been mentoring Miguel for several months now, and we're praying that God's Word would grab a great hold of his heart.

About two weeks ago, I was invited to preach at Iglesia Bautista Siquem in Sonsonate (a city 45 minutes south of us). This church was started over 30 years ago by a Salvadoran who is now a missionary to Romania. The church has fallen on hard times, as the pastor is advanced in years, and the membership has decreased to about 20-25. I preached to them the importance of being disciples of Christ, and of being faithful like the church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3). We have been burdened for this city for many years now. Please pray that God would breathe life into this church, that more churches would be established here and that we (our family and church) could contribute towards that in whatever way the Lord wants. Please also continue to pray for our plans to go to Honduras, sometime in the spring, to minister to a group of pastors.

By God's grace, we are still in transition as a church. It has been exactly one year since we moved out of the building that we were renting. However, the Lord has opened a door for us to be able to save a good amount of money. It looks like, in a few months, we will be able to have the amount saved that God has placed in our hearts. Please pray that God would do a miracle and that we could fully pay for a property that can comfortably accommodate at least 100 people. We are thankful that He has led us to depend entirely on Him.

The new school year has started in El Salvador. Our children began school on January 17. Rosa is in eighth grade, Caleb is in fourth grade, and Joshua is in second grade. The new school year has already presented us with some challenges, as those of you with children can understand. Please pray that our kids have a good testimony at their school and that they do their best. Rosa has a new opportunity presented to her this year. She is part of the city's basketball team. This is a great opportunity for her to let her light shine. Please pray for her in this new endeavor. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support.

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

October 2018

Dear praying friends:

As we prepare for the final months of the year, we would like to share with you some of God's blessings in our lives and ministry. By God's grace, we were able to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church in a unique way, the Bible institute continues to produce laborers for God's glory, and our children are close to concluding another school year.

October 4 marked the ten year anniversary of our church. God gave us the privilege of ordaining Mauricio Escobar as a pastor in the church. We thank God for him, his wife Dora, and their four children. They have been members of the church for about eight years now. Mauricio has been in charge of the adult Sunday school class for about two years, and he has proven himself faithful. Roberto Nieto and Fabricio Bonilla (two Salvadoran pastor friends of ours) were present for the ceremony. Brother Nieto preached all three Sunday services, and our church members felt greatly edified afterwards.

The day before Mauricio's ordination, Christine planned a special afternoon with Dora, his wife. We wanted Dora to know that without her support, Mauricio would not be as capable to fulfill God's calling on his life. Christine printed a large picture of Dora's family and presented it to her, along with encouraging words about caring for her family. Christine also gave her pages of verses that she had written out. These were special verses that could apply to Dora's life as a pastor's wife. Please pray for Dora as she starts her new role, and continues to care for her four children.

The Lord has answered your prayers for wisdom, as we patiently waited for the first pastor to be ordained. Please pray that within the next 2-3 years, Mauricio would be the main pastor of this congregation, and that God would use him also to train up other pastors and laborers. In other words, that we can reproduce ourselves in others regularly. In that way, we can focus on other churches being established. Who knows? Maybe within the next three years there could be two more pastors. Or within the next six years, there could be six more pastors.

The last quarter (October-December) of Bible institute has started well. We are offering two courses (Genesis and Romans). By God's grace, there are four men enrolled in classes, with the desire to better serve our Lord. Three of these men have preached in our church, and the other leads singing on Wednesdays. Please also pray that the Lord will replace those who graduate, as He blesses our evangelism and discipleship efforts.

As far as our family is concerned, our three children are very excited because school will be over in three weeks! This is their "summer" break, and they will not return to school until mid January. They are looking forward to the break, and so are we. Along with the church's anniversary, we celebrated Caleb's birthday. He was born the day after our first church service. We like to look at Caleb and see how he is growing, and compare this to our church's growth. It is a special time of year for us and we are grateful for God's blessings. Thank you for your prayers and support.

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



August/September 2018

Dear praying friends:

With a grateful heart we communicate many of the blessings received over the past two months. The Lord has been diligently at work with us as we try to spread the Gospel in different parts of Santa Ana. By God's grace, the Bible Institute continues to function as normal. We are also thankful for God's work in our family and many of our church members.

The Lord has been good to us, allowing Gustavo Bonilla to be a member of the church since the beginning. Gustavo is 76 years old, and someone that makes you ask: "Could God use such a person?" In addition to his age, he is somewhat difficult to understand, even for a native Spanish speaker. By nature, he is very shy and nervous. However, in God's power, he has overcome his deficiencies to be an effective communicator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Several weeks ago, Gustavo and another man from our church led a young lady (Raquel) to the Lord. It was the first time Gustavo's partner had witnessed to someone. It is such a blessing to see how Gustavo's boldness is impacting other church members.

Please pray for our evangelistic efforts. As a church, we go out door-knocking once per week. In addition to this, some of the church members witness to many people, on their own, regularly. It is our great desire that God would open doors and, as we follow up these professions of faith, that many would be stimulated to be disciplined and grow.

The Lord has answered your prayers concerning the Bible Institute. The purpose of this Institute has always been to train men to serve according to God's will for their lives. Even though we are having classes in our home, there are four men currently enrolled. Two of these men (José Escobar and Rolando Pacheco) are scheduled to graduate around the middle of next year. Please pray that God would continue to call Salvadoran men to the ministry, and that He would use us to train them, ultimately establishing many other churches in this country.

The ladies have started their second study of the year. While the first study focused on Christine teaching, the second study is more geared towards the ladies sharing what they have studied during the week. This is encouraging to Christine, to see the ladies placing importance on daily Bible study. They do not only come to sit and listen, but actively participate. We have had our highest attendance this year, with ten ladies attending. Please continue to pray for Christine as she guides and directs the conversation during these interactive studies.

Please pray for our children as they enter exam week. The third school period is ending, and they are getting ready to start the fourth and final period of the school year. School has been a bit difficult for Joshua (7 years old) lately. He has been complaining of headaches and has had some problems completing his school work. We have solved the mystery: he needs glasses! We are praying that things will improve for him once he can see more clearly. Please continue to pray for us as we strive to raise our children properly. Thank you for your prayers and support.

The Cernas

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# THE CERNAS NEWSLETTER



June/July 2018

Dear praying friends:

It is with a grateful heart to God that we write this letter. At the same time we thank you, never taking for granted your faithful prayers and support for us. The last couple of months are full of examples of God's distinct work in our lives and ministry.

It has been four months since we moved our church to a new location. We are very thankful for this time of transition, as it has given us an opportunity to pray and reflect on the direction that the Lord is leading us in. Although, humanly speaking, we are preparing by saving money and working hard, we have come to realize that what limits us is not money (or anything physical), but faith in God. We are trying to teach the church members that God can take what we have saved, like the five loaves and two fishes in John 6, and do something amazing with it. As a result of this, we are praying that we can buy the house that we had been renting for six years. Once the house has been bought, it can be remodeled into a sanctuary that can comfortably fit 200 people. So basically we are asking you to pray that our church would grow in faith, and that God would do something that is well beyond our capabilities.

In previous letters, we have written about how God has been working in José Escobar and his family. We are thankful to say that he has agreed to be the church treasurer. This is very important, because the church will not have to depend on us (Christine has been treasurer for quite a while now) for this. With God's wisdom, we are now closer to having an autonomous church. Since José has dedicated his life to the Lord, and is a civil engineer, he has said that God is leading him to be like Nehemiah, overseeing the building at our church. It is exciting to see how the Lord puts things in place, according to His will!

The Ladies Ministry has been growing. Recently, we had our highest attendance at the Tuesday Ladies Bible Study. We recently had a new lady come to the study. Her name is Evelyn, and her husband, who is unsaved, is Carlos. Christine and Evelyn have had opportunities to build a friendship through sharing motherhood stories. Evelyn and Carlos have two small children. Last week, at Ladies Bible Study, Evelyn told Christine, "I know I need to be here, this is important. It is hard bringing the children, but it is worth it." Pray for her spiritual growth. Also, please pray that the Holy Spirit would bring conviction to Carlos to be saved.

Our children have had a difficult month health wise. Living in a third world country means stomach problems. We are so thankful that this is the extent of the illness we experience, and are happy to report that they are all much better now. Please pray for us to remember to exercise caution. It is easy to forget to be careful, when this is home! Pray we make good decisions to eliminate opportunities for illness. As always, we thank you for your faithful support. Please keep the prayers coming!

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

April 2018

Dear praying friends:

The Lord has been so faithful over the past few months, that we cannot help but remember what He says in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, **“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”** We especially have seen His faithfulness in our move to a new location, in the continued spiritual growth of many of the church members and in His provision for our needs.

In our last letter, we informed you that we recently moved to a new location for church services. Initially, we were concerned with how some of our members would be able to get to the new location. With the transition, we had to change our van route to bring some of the elderly members (who live close to the old location) to church. So, those who were accustomed to being brought to church were asked to find another way to come. By God’s grace, the transition to our new location has been smoother than we had anticipated. Those that were faithful in riding the van to church also have been faithful in coming to church on their own. In fact, in one case, God gave one of the members a car to bring his family to church!

Since the transition, we are seeing more couples faithfully involving themselves in church. José Escobar has been faithful for some years now. He frequently goes soul-winning with us and is even starting to preach at church. We have been praying for his wife Marlene to rededicate her life to Christ. By God’s grace, He has answered our prayers. Marlene has been coming to church often, is getting involved in serving, and is now part of the ladies Bible study group that Christine is leading. Also, Esaú and Ruth have been coming to church for years. For quite some time now, we have tried to motivate them to get more involved, but to no avail. However, now that we are in a new location, they both have shown servant’s hearts that we would not have expected. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness!

As you already know, the goal of this transition has been to save money (out of the church members’ tithes and offerings) to buy land for a church building. The members have been giving faithfully. On two occasions, relatives of church members, upon learning that we are preparing to buy land, have given significant offerings toward that purpose. So, over the past two months, we have saved significantly more money than what we saved this past year in the other location. If the Lord permits, it looks like we will be able to buy land sometime within the next calendar year. We are so humbled to see how God provides in expected and unexpected ways.

Our daughter Rosa (13) has taken over our Wednesday night nursery. We tend to have a smaller group that service. She recently offered to take that responsibility to help lighten the nursery worker’s load. Caleb (9) has been thinking through actions and consequences lately. The phrase he says often is “that kid isn’t going to turn out.” While it gives us a chuckle to hear our son say that, we are grateful that he is learning and growing. Joshua (6) is very excited that his 7<sup>th</sup> birthday is just a few days away. It is hard for us to believe that our “baby” is actually a big kid now. The challenges seem to grow as they get bigger. Please keep us in your prayers.

The Cernas

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December 2017

Dear praying friends:

As always, we are thankful for the opportunity to end another year. The Lord has showered us with many blessings both in our family and at our church. If God permits, we are excited about the things that He has in store for us in 2018.

First of all, we would like to thank God for Parkview Baptist Church of Palm Coast, Florida. This church has been supporting us for over 13 years. A group of ten members of the church spent six days fellowshiping, serving, and being a great blessing to us. They painted the front of the church building, as well as the sanctuary. They also had special activities for the servants, ladies and men of our church. We are always thankful for all of our supporting churches. It is also a great blessing when one of those churches decides to send a group to see what the mission field is like.

It is amazing to see how God keeps opening doors for us to present the Gospel or share our testimony with people. Raul Bolaños is a businessman whom I met in line at a bank, just recently. I handed him a tract and briefly presented the Gospel to him. God used this to establish a connection with him and meet with him a few days later. I found out that He is a devout Catholic. He asked me how I made a living, and I explained to him Matthew 6:25-34. I told him that whenever we have a need, we do not mention it to others, neither do we borrow money or ask someone for it. Also, I told him that since I am seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness, He always supplies our needs. Obviously, this way of living is completely foreign to false religion. Please pray that Raul would continue to be interested in hearing God's Word and that the Holy Spirit would lead him to faith in Christ.

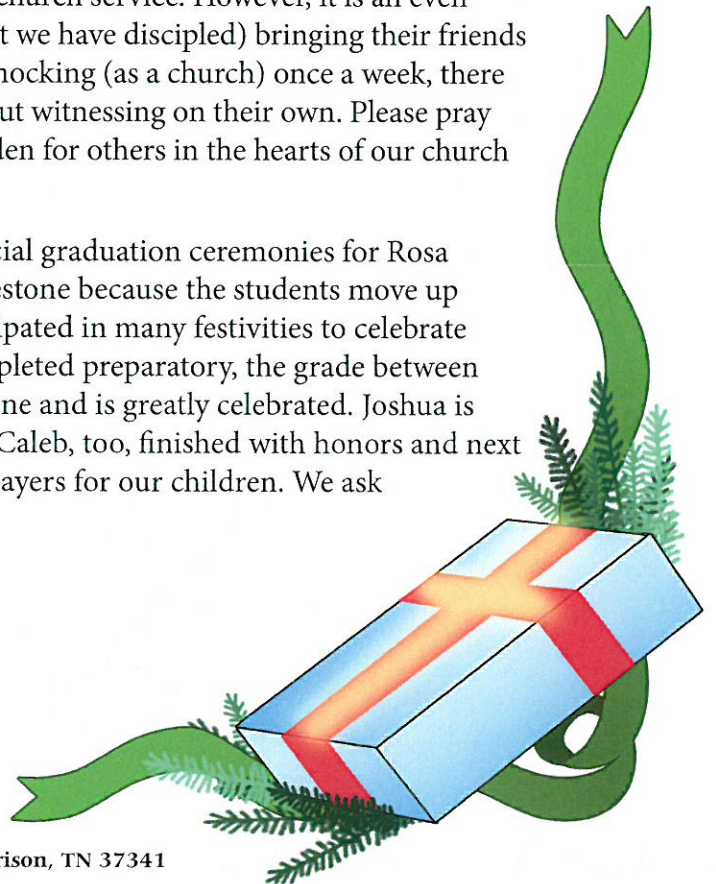
By God's grace, we have been seeing more visitors to our church services. It is always a blessing to see people we have invited attending a church service. However, it is an even greater blessing to see members of the church (that we have discipled) bringing their friends and neighbors to church. Although, we go door-knocking (as a church) once a week, there are some members who ask me for tracts and go out witnessing on their own. Please pray that the Lord would continue to cultivate this burden for others in the hearts of our church people.

We ended the school year in November, with special graduation ceremonies for Rosa and Joshua. Graduation from sixth grade is a milestone because the students move up to the next level of education at school. We participated in many festivities to celebrate Rosa's graduating with honors. Also, Joshua completed preparatory, the grade between kindergarten and first grade. This also is a milestone and is greatly celebrated. Joshua is excited to be moving up to first grade in January. Caleb, too, finished with honors and next year will begin third grade. Thank you for your prayers for our children. We ask you to continue praying for us as we guide them.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas

## The Cross: The True Gift of Christmas

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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October 2017

Dear praying friends:

With a heart of thankfulness, we give you a brief report of what the Lord has done lately. God has been faithful in motivating many of the church members to action. This has been evident in our soul-winning visitation and the celebration of the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iglesia Bautista Central (Central Baptist Church).

Last weekend, we celebrated yet another anniversary at the church. Probably, what blessed us the most was that the church members did most of the preparation for this event. Some of the ladies prepared a delicious meal, some of the men participated in the church service, and the guest preacher gave us a challenge about taking time to meditate on God's Word (from Luke 10:38-42).

Since the beginning of the church, one of my goals has been to preach every book of the Bible verse by verse. By God's grace, I have already completed 36 books and am currently preaching: Ezra, Exodus and Psalms. The blessings that have resulted from this endeavor have been incalculable. Among these blessings is that we are seeing God develop a group of stable believers who are properly motivated to serve the Lord. Also, preaching through the Bible keeps us from focusing on some of God's principles at the expense of others.

One of my biggest burdens (through preaching) has been to motivate believers to action out of grace and gratitude. So many times, it becomes easy to pressure believers out of guilt because we don't need to rely on God with this approach, and because (in the short-term) this approach seems to produce more visible results. However, in the long-term, it does not contribute to a healthy church. As I've preached the Bible (over the past nine years), it has been with a spirit of patience and dependence on God. So, when we see many of the church members showing up for soul-winning/visitation, we know that it is God's grace working in their lives.

Please pray for our soul-winning visitation Saturdays. It has been our goal to knock on all of the doors of the neighborhoods near the church at least three times this year. Pray that God will continue to open doors not only to witness to people, but to follow-up on those that have made professions of faith. Just recently, a lady named Sonia received Christ as her Savior. Also, a lady named Patricia rededicated her life to Christ.

Along with the church anniversary, we celebrated Caleb's ninth birthday. We enjoy telling Caleb the story of the church's first service. We thought maybe Caleb and the church would have the same birthday, but he waited until the next day. It is always good to remember how events unfolded nine years ago. Our children are all doing well, and we continue to have the best year we have ever had health-wise. We are grateful for the health we all have enjoyed, and don't take it for granted after having had some struggles in past years. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

August 2017

Dear praying friends:

Although the last couple of months have been as busy as always, it is good to sit down and reflect on how the Lord has worked. We thank God for raising another group of dedicated men who are studying in the Bible Institute. Also, the Lord has been faithful in using Christine to teach the ladies of the church.

As another quarter of Bible Institute begins, José, Israel, and Rolando continue to faithfully study God's Word. Most of the men who have studied in the Bible Institute have come from modest backgrounds, with minimal formal education. Although this has presented quite a challenge for me, we have come to realize that those with more modest backgrounds are more likely to depend on God. After all, 1 Corinthians 1:27 does say: *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise..."* In fact, the graduate of the Bible institute that God is using most has 1 Corinthians 1:27 as his life verse.

Pray for us, as we learn to balance the academic with development of character and dependence on God. Up until recently, the Bible institute students have been more intimidated with the academic than with the development of character. This has led them to a greater dependence on God. With Israel (construction worker) and Rolando (shoe cobbler), this is certainly the case. With José (a civil engineer) it is different. Since he has an intellectual background, the concept of depending on God is more foreign to him. We thank God that He can bring men from different backgrounds to the same church, and teach them to depend on God all the same. Please pray for these three men, as they will be preaching in church in the near future.

Christine recently started the second Ladies Bible Study of the year. She was talking to one of the ladies about writing curriculum for the study, sharing that it is good to challenge yourself to do something hard. This helps us to depend more on God. The lady took that challenge personally, deciding to do a verse by verse study in her children's Sunday School class (without leaving out the harder passages). Pray for Dora as she studies her Bible more thoroughly.

Our children have been very healthy and are excited to be close to the end of the Salvadoran school year. They will be done in October, and they are counting down the days until their long "summer" break. Rosa continues to serve in the nursery and helps with the children's ministry. Rosa recently played piano for the first time at church. We are looking forward to her playing more often as she improves. Caleb is beginning to read the Bible on his own. He has developed a love for reading, and we believe he will develop a love for reading his Bible. Joshua is still trying to get a good handle on Spanish. Being the youngest, it is harder for him to speak and be as involved with friends as his two older siblings. We are confident, that with time, he will follow their example. Thank you for praying for our kids.

Yours in Christ,  
Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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June 2017

Dear praying friends:

Just over the last couple of months, we have experienced a great many blessings from God. He has given us growth both in the amount of members of the church, as in the maturity level of our core members. The doors are definitely being opened for us to serve Him in even greater ways.

Please pray for Raul (71) and Isabel (60). This married couple is being discipled on Wednesday mornings. Raul's background includes having been a drunkard for many years, and Isabel was a devout Catholic before receiving Christ as her Savior. They are very excited about learning more of God's Word and eventually serving at the church.

It is also a great blessing to see how God is working with our teen group. Miguel has been coming (with his mother and three brothers) to church for about six years now. This is the family where the father was shot and killed about seven years ago. Miguel has been studying the discipleship lessons with me on Saturdays. Even though his two older brothers aren't faithful, we have decided to invest in his life. His mom is very impressed with the amount of Bible verses he has memorized lately. Please pray that God's Word would grab ahold of his life and that he would have a passion to do God's Will.

Carlos is another teenager who is basically growing up without a father. He has been faithfully coming to church since we began the teen Sunday school class. His sister and brother-in-law have been faithful members of the church for years and are now taking him under their wing, helping him grow in God's Word. I get even more excited when I see those that we've discipled, doing the same things for others. By God's grace, this is becoming more common at our church.

Our daughter Rosa has also been a part of the teen class since it began in January. We are thankful with the way God has been working in her heart. Not only has she been faithfully serving the Lord in the church nursery, but she also has been acquiring a greater burden for others. Over the past several months, Rosa has been taking piano classes from a young lady (Marielos) who has been a member of the Mormon cult. A little while ago, Rosa added her to her prayer list. We are thankful to say that Marielos has stopped going to the cult and is now going to a Christian church. Please pray for Marielos that she would receive Christ as her Savior.

Caleb and Joshua are also doing well. Joshua has learned to read very well in Spanish. We are still working on reading in English, which is a little trickier. Caleb continues to do well in his classes also. As always, we ask for you to pray for us as we raise our three children. As all of you that are parents know, it can be quite a challenge at times. Thank you for praying.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

March 2017

Dear praying friends:

It certainly has been an eventful last couple of months here in El Salvador. The Lord has opened doors for us to witness, baptize and disciple souls. As April (the anniversary of our arrival in the country) approaches, we are thankful for God's grace in keeping us serving with enthusiasm and determination.

Back in February, we had the blessing of baptizing three souls for Christ. Edwin (32), who was saved three years ago during a VBS, finally made the decision to follow the Lord in baptism. One of the faithful men (Wilfredo) at our church has been studying the discipleship lessons with him. Edwin now brings his wife Vanessa (led to Christ by Christine two years ago) and their two small children to church with him. Please pray for their continued spiritual growth.

It is a special blessing when the children of our faithful members are baptized. Natasha (9) and Estiven (8) followed the Lord in baptism. Their parents, Dora and Mauricio, have been faithful for many years. Please pray that these two children would continue to grow in the Lord and that the Lord would fulfill His purposes for their lives.

Over the last few months, we have become increasingly burdened with the need to improve evangelism. By God's grace, He has kept us faithful in knocking on doors in the neighborhoods that are close to the church. Although we will always focus on reaching our neighbors for Christ, I have been burdened to teach the church to be more soul-conscious. Going out evangelizing with the church is great and beneficial, but it is even more beneficial to try to reach people no matter where one may be. So, as much as possible, I've made it a point to witness to the people I run into, as I'm out doing errands or whatever else I may be doing. I've discovered that I can witness to around 15-20 people per week just in the normal course of life. So, imagine if ten church members learn how to do this. The result would be 150-200 souls witnessed to per week. The potential to saturate this city with the Gospel is greatly increased. Please pray that the Lord would continue to burden the hearts of the church members to be obedient in the Great Commission.

As our 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of being in the country approaches, we are overwhelmed with thankfulness in a God who has supplied us with the strength and courage to serve Him. We came to El Salvador with a burden and much enthusiasm. Even though we have endured our fair share of trials and disappointments (which are normal in God's Will), we are thankful to say that God has kept in us, and even increased, the burden and enthusiasm to do His Will.

Please continue to pray for our children. The first quarter of the school year is about to end, and they are busily studying for exams. By God's grace He has kept us fairly healthy over the past several months. As always, thank you so much for the faithful prayers and support.

Yours in Christ,  
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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

February 2017

Dear praying friends:

Over the past couple of months, we have seen the Lord work in many marvelous ways. The doors are being opened in evangelism, new ministries in the church, and a greater consciousness of our responsibility in worldwide missions.

About a few weeks ago, I had an interesting experience with regard to soul-winning. Typically, when one goes to the bank in this country, the expectation is that the wait will be for at least one hour. Whenever I go to the bank, I use it as an opportunity to hand out tracts and share the gospel with people. This particular day, as soon as I entered the bank, I approached a man who did not look busy, and proceeded to witness to him. After finishing, I proceeded to another man who did not look busy, and started witnessing to him. About a minute into my witness to him, a security guard came to me and tells me that I am not supposed to hand out tracts in the bank. So I politely told him that I would not hand out any more tracts in the bank and proceeded to finish my witness to the second man. After this, I thought to myself, "Since I don't need tracts to witness to people, and it is not illegal to talk to them, I will go witness to someone else." So I proceeded to witness to another man who did not seem busy. Another security guard came to me, asking me why I was at the bank. I showed him my deposit slip. Once that security guard left, I finished witnessing to the third man. About 15 minutes had gone by since I entered the bank, and I proceeded to witness to another man (there were dozens of people at the bank that day). As I started witnessing to this man, a security guard came to me and said, "Follow me." He took me directly to the teller and asked her to take care of my deposit. I end up spending 20 minutes in the bank when I normally have to wait for an hour! The sad part is that people are becoming more increasingly threatened by the Gospel, even if it is presented in a discrete and polite way. Please pray that we can continue having boldness in sharing God's Word.

Please pray for our annual mission's conference in a couple of weeks. The church (Tabernáculo Bautista), where we worked our first two years in the country, is getting ready to send its first foreign missionary. We are honored that this missionary (Jorge Arias) will preach at our conference. Brother Jorge is scheduled to go to Nicaragua around the end of February. It is exciting to see a Salvadoran who is being sent by a Salvadoran church. We pray that one day the Lord would give us the privilege of sending missionaries from our church in Santa Ana.

Since the year started, we have made some changes in the schedule of our church. We now have a Sunday school hour on Sunday mornings. During this hour, the church divides itself into four different groups (adults, teenagers, children, and infants). We are thankful that there is a man (Mauricio) in our church who has been trained to minister to the adults. We are praying about ordaining him to the ministry in the near future. Having a Sunday school class will give him an opportunity to hone his teaching skills. As God raises up more faithful laborers like Mauricio and his wife, the church can divide itself into more groups, and it will allow us to be more effective in reaching others.

As always, we thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support.

The Cernas

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December 2016

Dear praying friends,

As another year winds down, we cannot help but reflect on the faithfulness of God. He has given us the grace and strength to remain faithful, to continue to grow in dependence on Him, and to be excited as ever to serve.

When we started the year, and planned the budget for our household and church, we realized that God had to miraculously intervene in order for our needs to be met. So we had to make a choice between worrying (and making decisions based on that) or trusting in verses such as Matthew 6:33 and Philippians 4:19. As we had written earlier, several years ago we decided to serve the Lord without ever asking for anything or mentioning any needs. We truly want to depend more on the Lord and teach others to do so. We firmly believe that if we are in God's will, and are doing the things He wants us to do, He will supply all of our needs. With a floundering economy and an extremely high crime rate, El Salvador desperately needs to see these Biblical principles lived out.

As you can imagine, throughout the year, we were met with unexpected expenses and needs. At the same time, God has met our needs through unexpected sources. Every single item on the yearly budget has been supplied! Many things have been supplied in ways that I never could have guessed in the beginning of the year. Of course, these experiences have taught us many lessons. As we move forward, we realize that there will be greater needs for our family and church. However, we grow excited in anticipating how God will supply. The excitement isn't so much in the things that God provides, but in the loving God whose hand we constantly see in action. Other members of our church are catching this excitement. Mauricio and Dora are a faithful couple that have been dealing with financial problems, especially with the birth of their fourth child this year. They have decided to depend on God, and He has supplied their needs, many times in unexpected ways.

Of course, dependence on God needs to be applied to every other area of our lives. When four men graduated from the Bible institute, earlier this year, we were worried that there would be no more men interested in learning how to better serve the Lord. However, God has kept the institute going, raising up more men who want to grow and learn. In evangelism, we continue to make an effort to reach people, as the church has knocked on more than 15,000 doors of the city this year. Although it is very rare to see results instantly, God frequently brings visitors to church, and we have seen some decisions for salvation. Once again, we are thankful for the Lord's faithfulness.

With the same theme in mind, we must also trust God entirely with the raising of our children. While it would be easy to worry and fret, we are comforted by God's promises such as Proverbs 20:7, which says: *"The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."* As we are confronted with a society with decaying moral values, dependence on God in this area has become more pressing. Please pray for us, as we seek to have a closer walk with the Lord and make an even greater effort to teach our children. We hope and pray that the same excitement we have for God and His Word would rub off on them.

There is great excitement about the upcoming year. Rosa will be in the sixth grade, Caleb in second grade, and Joshua starts "preparatoria" (the grade between kindergarten and first grade). Our church starts its tenth year of existence, and we will celebrate our ninth annual missions conference in February. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support.

Your servants in Christ,  
The Cernas



# THE CERNA FAMILY

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

October 2016

Dear Praying Friends,

Rainy season is ending here in El Salvador, and the weather has slightly cooled. We look forward to this time of year because we celebrate the church's anniversary. Last week we celebrated the church's 8-year-anniversary with 65 in attendance. It was a special day of thanking God for giving us eight years in the city of Santa Ana. It was quite moving to look over the congregation and reminisce about each member's story. We are thankful for the souls that have been saved and the lives that God has changed in eight years time, and we are more excited than ever to see what God has in store for the years to come.

In our June prayer letter, we asked that you pray that Mirna would get baptized. We are happy to share that she did get baptized earlier this month. This was miraculous because she is very shy and did not want any attention on herself. She told Christine, "I know I need to be obedient, so I am going to get baptized." After her baptism, Christine was talking to her 12-year-old daughter as they waited for Mirna to change. Her name is Iris, and she is not saved. Christine witnessed to her, but she was not ready to get saved. Pray that she will see her need for salvation and accept Jesus in the near future. The week after she was baptized, Mirna was robbed as she was walking home from church. Her daughter Iris was with her, and as you can imagine, they are quite shook up. Please pray for peace in Mirna's life that she will not let fear to overcome her. Also please pray that God would use this situation to bring Iris to salvation.

Another church member named Jenny has recently corrected some issues in her life and is on fire for the Lord. She invited us to her house to witness to two of her neighbors who were lost. It was a beautiful moment when they each recognized their need for the Savior and bowed their heads to pray for their salvation. Please pray for Julia, who has some serious health issues, and her husband, Antonio, who cares for her. There is no doubt in our hearts that there are many more people, like Julia and Antonio, who are just waiting to hear and receive the good news of the Gospel. Please pray that the Lord would continue to work in our hearts, making us more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading in witnessing to others.

In El Salvador, the school year ends in October. Our kids are busily preparing for their final exams. Well, they are preparing for all of their exams except for the one in speaking English. They do just fine in that subject! We are happy to have another school year almost complete. This was Joshua's first year in school and we are happy with his abilities in speaking Spanish after only one year. While for the most part they have adapted well, there are still bumps along the way with cultural differences and struggles with speaking two languages. Please continue to pray for our little ones, growing up as third-culture kids.

We are thankful for you and how you help to keep us here on the mission field. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

The Cernas in El Salvador

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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August 2016

Dear praying friends,

It is always such a blessing to know how our prayer letter is being read, and how God burdens more and more believers to pray for us. As usual, the past two months have been eventful and full of blessings. God keeps working in our church, filling many of the members with His grace to give of themselves, and what they have, for His work. The Lord also continues to work in our family, giving us the strength and wisdom to continue in His work.

Ever since we started (11 years ago) as missionaries, it has been our desire to be faithful stewards of what God has given us. Not only did we come to Santa Ana to give generously to the people, but to teach them to give generously, and to finally be able to sustain themselves. Even though most of the church members are poor, we have believed in God's grace to motivate believers to give just like He did with the churches of Macedonia in 2 Corinthians 8. Over the past six months we have especially seen God's grace at work, as the church members have consistently given about 65% of the church's budget. Giving has gone up to such a point that we are now saving up money to buy land for the church.

God's grace has also extended itself to the area of evangelism. Over the past couple of months, there have been four men who have gone out door-knocking with Steve regularly. Although, we teach church members the importance of personal evangelism, most of these men came to Steve, revealing their desire to be obedient to God's Word. Please pray, as these men are learning. The goal is not simply that they learn how to lead people to Christ (and to do it consistently), but to reproduce themselves in others, training other also to become "fishers of men."

We are excited about our daughter Rosa, who has been taking piano lessons. She has started practicing with our music ministry leaders. She will probably start playing for church services sometime next year. Christine has been training her in how to work in the nursery and has also begun to instruct her in how to teach small children. Rosa has proven herself invaluable to the nursery ministry, with the ability to help little ones not cry for their mamas. Christine is planning to have her teach a mini lesson to a Sunday School class in a few weeks. Besides Rosa, there are two other preteens who show much potential for serving the Lord. Christine has been burdened for them and has started teaching these young people how to serve. It is our hope that they will be committed Christians and that this commitment will grow through their teenage years. Please pray for Rosa, Jeimy, and Miguel.

Caleb and Joshua, our boys, are also doing well. While they are too young to serve in the church, we are continuously working with them in hopes of them becoming servants. We always enjoy talking to them about what they want to be when they grow up. Caleb has mentioned being a missionary, and Joshua is adamant that he will be a pastor like his daddy. Please pray with us for our children, one of our most important ministries is reaching them. Thank you for your prayer and financial support.

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

June 2016

Dear praying friends,

There is no doubt that God has worked greatly in our lives over the past couple of months. It is exciting to see believers growing in their faith and to see new ministries getting started at the church. Also, we thank God for using you to allow us to serve Him here in El Salvador.

During our last letter, we mentioned the plans for starting a bakery at the church. By God's grace, He miraculously supplied the funds (\$1,200) for us to get started. We have been able to buy the instruments, and Mauricio (the Bible institute graduate who will be running it) has been learning to bake bread by one of the members of the church who has experience. Please pray that the bakery could be self-sustaining in six months. As we previously mentioned, the purpose of this bakery is so that Mauricio can support his family while training (with Steve) to work full-time in ministry. Also, this is what we plan on doing with the Bible college students, once the Lord opens up a door to get it started.

It is always a blessing to share with you our excitement for evangelism. By God's grace, as a church, we have had the privilege of personally sharing the Gospel to approximately 350 people over the past two months. Please pray for Valentín, who Steve witnessed to this past month. The Bible would call him: "a man wise in his own conceit." Thankfully, a seed was planted, and we have come to learn that God can change the hardest of hearts. Mauricio's dad (José) was also "a man wise in his own conceit," but God has worked in his heart in such a way that he now serves humbly at church.

Christine was encouraged by the Ladies Bible Study this past week. She has been talking to a new lady about it, and even stopped at her house to pick her up. However, the lady answered the door saying, "Oh, I'm not ready." Once at the church, a different new lady showed up, saying she has known for a few weeks she needed to start coming to study the Bible. Her name is Mirna, and she is very shy. It was a victory that she arrived on her own, to a Bible Study she knew little about. She was saved about a year ago at the end of a church service. We have been praying for her to be motivated to grow spiritually. This was a great step in her life, and we are praying she will be baptized in the near future.

Many years ago we decided to not mention any more needs, while also not setting out to raise more support, trusting that God would provide. It has been over ten years since we've been doing this, and God continues to keep us on the field. The purpose for this was to teach our people to fully depend on God and that the promise of Matthew 6:33 is as alive as ever. Thankfully, some church members are starting to learn this lesson. Here in El Salvador there are many churches and preachers, but it seems that God's work has been hindered by a lack of laborers who depend on God. We don't know how many pastors or missionaries the Lord will use us to ultimately train, but it is imperative that those that are going into ministry learn to fully depend on Him. We thank God for you.

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

April 2016

Dear Praying Friends,

It is always an honor to share with you many of the things God has done, here in El Salvador, over the past two months. The Lord is opening up doors of opportunity for us to take the Gospel further. Now, more than ever, we covet your prayers, in order to make wise decisions that will make a great impact for years to come.

One of our greatest goals, as a church, has been to train men for full-time Christian service. A graduate of our Bible Institute, Mauricio Escobar, has shared with us a desire to serve the Lord full-time. Over the past three years, Mauricio and his wife Dora have been able to support themselves with a small business. At the same time they have been taking care of their children and serving substantially at the church. As a result of this, we pray that the Lord would allow us to start a bakery at the church. That way, Mauricio can work only 40 hours per week, support his family, and have plenty of time to keep developing in ministry. Also, Steve can spend more time mentoring him before he is ordained for the ministry. While in many of the Christian families, one or both of the parents are enslaved to their jobs (thus not serving the Lord as He wants), Mauricio and Dora have shown a great desire to do the will of God.

Starting a bakery would also open the door for us to start a Bible College eventually. This way, the students can work flexible hours to support themselves and prepare for the ministry. The most important resource to start a Bible College is the people who will be running it. In addition to Steve, we pray that God raises up, through the ministry, three faithful men over the next five years. It is our desire to be able to minister to dozens or even hundreds of young men and women that God has called to the ministry. The results of the last 10 years of ministry here in El Salvador have opened the door for us to plan to serve in this way.

By God's grace, the church keeps marching along in evangelism. Over the last two months, we have had the privilege of personally sharing the gospel with about 400 people, in addition to the great many tracts that have been passed out. Please pray for a young man named William Rivas, who Steve led to Christ while door-knocking near the church. Although there is great joy when someone makes a profession of faith, we understand that the work does not end there. We need to continue to depend on the Lord for follow-up and discipleship.

Thank you for always keeping our children in your prayers. While we have had normal ups-and-downs over the past few months, overall things are going well. They just finished the first period of the school year and performed well. Caleb ended with A honor roll, and Rosa with B honor roll. Joshua turned five the beginning of April and we had a fun day celebrating as a family. He says a big thank you to those who sent him birthday cards. Our littlest is no longer a baby, but a big school boy! Please continue to pray for us as we raise them. We daily seek God's guidance for their lives. Thank you for your faithful prayers, encouraging emails, and support. We could not be here without you all behind us.

Your missionaries in El Salvador,

Steve Cerna

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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February 2016

Dear Praying Friends,

As always, we are thankful for the opportunity to begin a new year of ministry. The Lord has showered us with many blessings both in our family and at our church. We are excited about the things that God has in store for us the rest of the year.

Last year, we asked you to pray for the men of our Bible institute. The original plan was for our first graduation to be in January. However, we decided to push the graduation to April so that we could include another one of our faithful men. This means that four men will be graduating from the institute in April, instead of three in January. We also asked you to pray that the Lord would replenish the institute with more men, as those that graduate move on to other things. By God's grace, He has given us five men (other than those that are graduating) who are enrolled, and excited to learn more about God's Word.

In April, we are planning to start an outreach ministry that will be completely run by the graduates of the institute. The idea is that this will be a precursor or training ground to start other churches. Please pray that God would continue to use these men in a powerful way. As the church grows, and these men gain experience, it is our vision to start at least another church in our city, and several churches throughout the country on a yearly basis. Ever since we started (eight years ago) it has been our prayer and desire to grow a church that can run itself without our help. This plan has been slow to develop, since we started from scratch (those that are graduating had no prior ministry experience before we met them). Now, several men in our church are not only able to preach and reach others to Christ, but disciple them as well. In other words, it is exciting to see the church finally coming out of its childhood.

The Lord has also blessed us in the area of personal evangelism. Since the beginning of the year we have evangelized several times in different city parks. The willingness of the people to at least listen to the message of the Gospel has been humbling. Just this week we were at the central park of the city for two hours, and Steve was able to share the Gospel personally 18 times. More and more members of the church are realizing that sharing the Gospel with individuals is not an impossibly difficult task. Please pray that we could see more fruit, and that more of our members would take the Lord's Great Commission more seriously.

Our family is doing well. Joshua just recovered from the mosquito-borne illness called Zika Virus. While he was miserable for a few days, we are thankful that he is a sturdy, healthy boy and bounced back quickly. Caleb and Rosa have been healthy and all of the kids are doing well in school, learning lots of Spanish and understanding the culture better. They started the new school year with excitement. We are thankful that Joshua is doing very well; much better than we anticipated. His teacher says he seems to understand everything and he has made some little friends. Thank you for praying for our children and for us.

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December 2015

Dear praying friends,

Over the past month we have continued to see God's hand of blessing in our lives and in the lives of many of our church members. It is humbling to think about how the Lord has given us the strength to make it through another year. If God permits, we are excited about what He will do in our lives in 2016.

In our last letter, we asked you to pray for Mauricio Escobar's father (José), who had just rededicated his life to Christ. We are thankful to say he (along with his wife Marlene) were baptized during the Sunday morning service last week. They both seem excited about growing in the Lord. José, who studied the discipleship course with Steve a few years ago, now wants to be enrolled in the Bible Institute for the upcoming quarter. Marlene just started the discipleship course with Christine. We are very excited to see people that we have prayed about for years, finally taking steps of faith. Please continue to pray for this family.

The last week of December brings an end to another year of Bible Institute. The two courses offered this quarter (October – December) are: Local Church Philosophy and the Book of Genesis. By God's grace, there were six men enrolled for the past quarter. Earlier this year we asked you to pray for the three men (Wilfredo, Gustavo, and Mauricio) who we're planning on graduating in January. It looks like these men are still on track. Please pray for them that they would continue to be faithful and open to the possibility to be used eventually in full-time Christian work.

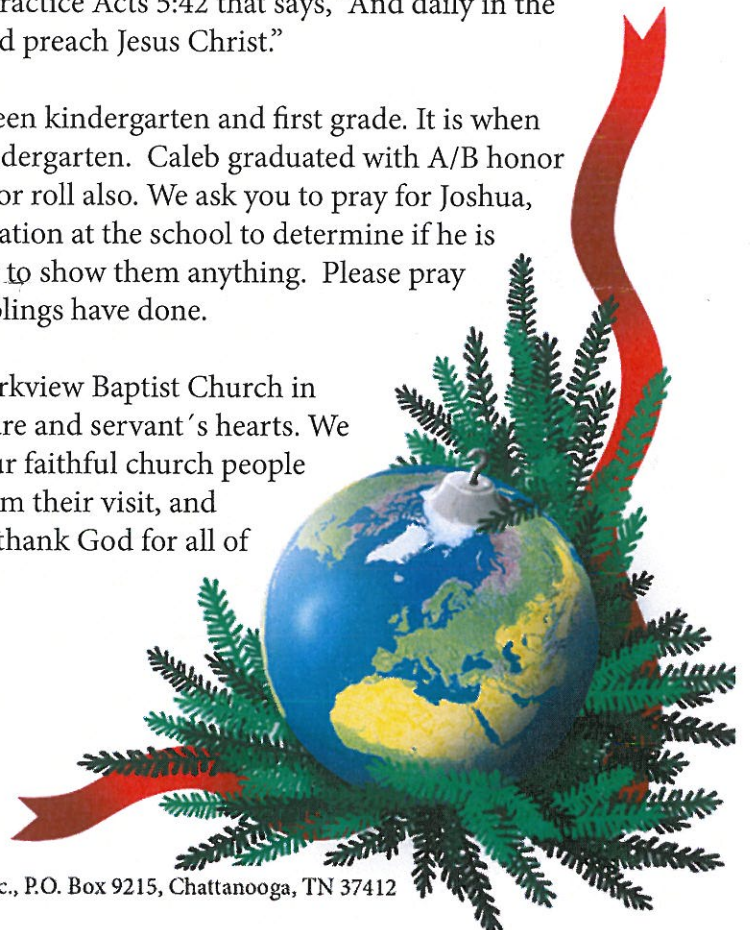
Also, please pray that, as these men move on in ministry, God would replenish the institute with more men who serve Him. The only way that this is going to happen is that we continue to depend on God in door-to-door evangelism and discipleship of those who make professions of faith. This means we need God's blessing on our lives as we continue to practice Acts 5:42 that says, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Last month, Caleb ended "preparatoria," which is between kindergarten and first grade. It is when the children have a graduation ceremony instead of kindergarten. Caleb graduated with A/B honor roll. Rosa did well again, ending the year with A/B honor roll also. We ask you to pray for Joshua, who will be starting school in January. He had an evaluation at the school to determine if he is ready. Although he knows all the basics, he was too shy to show them anything. Please pray for our youngest that he will thrive at school like his siblings have done.

We had a wonderful visit from a supporting church, Parkview Baptist Church in Palm Coast, Florida. They came with lots of love to share and servant's hearts. We had numerous activities, including special events for our faithful church people and special outreach efforts. We are still seeing fruit from their visit, and thank God for the encouragement they were to us. We thank God for all of you, and pray you have a wonderful Christmas.

Yours in Christ,

The Cernas



# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

November 2015

Dear Praying Friends,

The last couple of months have been filled with open doors for ministering to people. We have also had the opportunity to reflect on the many blessings the Lord has given us every year since the church was started (2008). There have also been occasions to thank God for the strength and wisdom He has given us in enduring the usual trials. This makes us more thankful than ever for churches like you that are keeping us here on the field with your prayers and support.

In October we celebrated the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iglesia Bautista Central. During the service, we had one church member for every year of the church step forward and share a testimony. This means that the first (Gustavo Bonilla) and of the most recent (Ricardo Arévalo) members to be baptized at the church were among those that gave a testimony. It was refreshing to remember how the Lord has worked miraculously every year since the church was established. Without a doubt, the anniversary service inspired us to keep working hard in anticipation of what the Lord will continue to do through us in the future.

It is also a great blessing to see how the Lord works powerfully in families. Imelda Figueroa, who just recently completed the discipleship course with Christine, has been coming to church with her son and one of her daughters. She was finally able to bring her other two daughters to church. One of them (Stephanie) rededicated her life to church just recently during a Wednesday evening service. About two weeks ago, Stephanie brought one of her college classmates (Jorge) to church, and he ended up receiving Christ as his Savior. Also, the father of one of our most faithful members (Mauricio Escobar) rededicated his life to Christ this past week and has started to come to church. Steve led him to Christ about four years ago, but he hadn't wanted to grow spiritually. Please pray for these two families that the rest of the members would receive or rededicate their lives to Christ.

Mauricio Escobar will be completing his final Bible Institute course in March of 2016. Because of this, we are praying about starting an outreach ministry (that he will be in charge of) in his neighborhood (Barrio San Miguelito). Please pray for Mauricio and Dora (his wife) that they will remain faithful and learn more and more to seek refuge in God during trials. Of all of our members, Mauricio is the one who seems to be closest to becoming a pastor. We are training him with this goal in mind and so that he could train others to be in ministry as well. We pray that once we ordain our first pastor, God will give us the opportunity to train and ordain more on a regular basis. This, in turn, will allow us to start many churches in this country, and frequently.

We thank God that all three of our children have been exceptionally healthy these past three months. We had a rough start to the year health-wise, but now everyone has been doing very well. We thank you for praying for our health. We have seen God answer your prayers.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

September 2015

Dear praying friends,

The Lord has given us so many blessings over the past two months. He continues to allow us to take part in the work of the Great Commission, the groundwork is being prepared for starting more ministries, and our family continues to serve in the midst of the usual trials.

The door-knocking ministry continues to bear fruit, as Steve led a young man (Samuel) to the Lord. Please pray for him as we do the work of follow-up with him. We are thankful to report that, as a church, we knocked on over 3,000 doors for the months of July and August. By God's grace, we continue to see fruit that remains from this ministry. Earlier this year, a young man (Vladimir) whose uncle was reached to the Lord from door-knocking, received Christ as his Savior at the end of a Sunday evening service. Vladimir was baptized along with three others last month and has started the discipleship course with Mauricio (our song leader) who was also reached to the Lord by door-knocking five years ago.

Slowly but surely the church continues to grow. Please pray for wisdom in starting more ministries with the purpose of giving our faithful men and women greater opportunities to minister. There are two men at the church that have preached at least once a month since the beginning of the year. Next year, we want to start an outreach ministry in one of these men's homes. This would give them the opportunity to preach several times per month and thus continue to develop as preachers. One of our greatest desires is that, eventually, men like these become ordained for the ministry. This would allow us to start many other churches and send missionaries to other countries.

Christine disciplined a lady named Dora a few years ago. Dora has grown spiritually and has been discipling others. Now, Christine and Dora are discipling ladies together. While Christine disciplined a mother (Imelda), Dora disciplined her grown daughter (Raquel). These two ladies have completed the 16 lesson series and are preparing to serve in the church very soon. Now Christine and Dora are looking at the next two ladies that they will disciple, side by side. Please pray for Mirna and Vanessa, as they prepare to study the one-on-one lessons with Christine and Dora.

While Christine and Dora disciple, Rosa (our oldest) babysits her brothers and Dora's three children. While this job is not easy for a ten-year-old, she overall enjoys the work, knowing that she is serving Jesus. Please pray for our daughter, as we teach her about serving others. Recently a church member told us that Rosa works well with others, is attentive, and is a servant. You can imagine how happy these words made us, seeing results of ten years of teaching. Please keep Rosa in your prayers, along with her younger brothers Caleb and Joshua. We daily need God's wisdom to raise them properly. We are grateful that the health issues they had at the beginning of the year have subsided. These past two months have been very healthy months for our family. Thank you for praying for our family. Thank you for praying for our ministry, and for your faithful support.

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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July 2015

Dear Praying Friends,

As we reach the half-way point of the year, God keeps reminding us of His presence and guidance in our lives. Even in the midst of some difficulties, we are thankful to report many of the blessings that God has poured on us.

We would like to start out the letter by asking you to pray for the families of our church. Right now, El Salvador is in the midst of a great problem with gang-related crime. It looks like the gangs have waged war on the government. One of our families, who owns a store, was recently threatened by gangs. They were asked to pay them a certain amount of money or suffer the consequences (being killed). It turns out that the gangs would use this money to buy weapons. These types of situations are becoming more increasingly common. Thankfully, our family has not had to deal personally with these gangs, but the way things are going, it is probably only a matter of time. In all of this, we have a great God who protects us and gives us wisdom in difficult times.

God continues to give us the strength to keep serving and seeing fruit in the different areas of ministry. Very recently, the men of the Bible institute went door-knocking in one of the neighborhoods near the church. Steve had the great joy of seeing a teenager (Cristian) receive Christ as his Savior. Also, please pray for Luis, Esaú and Ricardo that they would be even more rooted in Christ. They have recently completed the discipleship course with Steve and seem excited to serve in the church. We are thankful to report that three men (Wilfredo, Mauricio, and Gustavo) are in line to graduate from the Bible Institute by the end of the year. Please pray for them and for the ministry in general that those that receive Christ would be disciplined, that those that are disciplined would study in the Bible Institute and that those that complete the Bible Institute would be used greatly of the Lord.

This past month, Steve's grandmother, who lived in our city, passed on to eternity. We are glad that she accepted Christ as her Savior a few years back. However, she couldn't completely let go of her religious traditions. This was reflected in the funeral. We felt quite uncomfortable at the funeral because of this. But at the moment when things were awkward, suddenly a group of our church ladies showed up to be there for us. It was a huge relief, encouragement, and just what we needed in that moment. When fellow Christians rally around someone in a difficult time, it becomes a bit easier. We are grateful for the Women's Ministry in our church, how these ladies have grown in maturity and are willing to help in a time of need. We have personally benefited from this.

Caleb has had a number of health problems including stomach issues and strep throat. He had a serious fall off of a set of stairs and landed on his wrist. An X-ray revealed hyper-extended tendons but no broken bones. After realizing the height of his fall and then seeing concrete he landed on, we are amazed that his injuries were not more severe. Thank you for praying for our family's health and safety. We felt your prayers and are thankful.

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

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April 2015

Dear praying friends,

It is with great joy that we are writing to you this month, as we have seen the Lord work in extraordinary ways. God has been faithful in giving the increase, as the congregation of the church keeps growing in maturity and numbers. This month also marks our 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary in this country, and we are thankful for His strength that allows us to keep going even in the midst of difficulty and trials.

Several weeks ago, a lady (Imelda) and her daughter (Raquel) started coming to the Sunday evening church services. We recognized them right away because they live close to the church. About seven years ago, as Steve was door-knocking in the neighborhood, we came in contact with this family. This is when Roberto (Imelda's oldest son) received Christ as his Savior. Soon after, he started the discipleship lessons and would attend some of the church services. The rest of the family was not interested in spiritual things. Nevertheless, we did what we could to help them and show them Christ's love. They never forgot some of the ways we reached out to them. After some serious difficulties in their lives, they realized their need to receive Christ as Savior. They are now part of our church, seven years after trying to reach them. The mom and daughter are studying one-on-one discipleship lessons. Roberto is about to start studying again next week. We are grateful to see God bringing forth fruit from seeds planted many years ago!

As we keep planting the seed of God's Word (5,500 doors knocked and over 400 people witnessed to with the Gospel every three months), please pray that we would be diligent in reaping and being faithful stewards of God's harvest.

More familiar faces showed up at our church services recently. This time, it was a family that was part of our church over four years ago. They left our church on friendly terms, but they were looking for something "bigger and better" and only came to find confusion and disappointment. They have returned, apologizing for leaving, saying that they wish they would have never left. They are both now studying one-on-one discipleship lessons with us. Please pray for this couple (Esaú and Ruth) as they have been through great trials and need to understand the importance of resting in the Lord.

Our youngest son, Joshua (4 yrs old) has had a rather rough start to the year health-wise. Since January, he has had chikungunya, rotavirus, chicken pox, and parasites. We are grateful that none of these problems were serious. Please pray that things start improving for our little guy. We took him to the doctor this week, and the doctor says he is doing well right now. As always, we covet your prayers for our family's health and well being. Also, please remember to pray for us as parents to have wisdom raising our three children to have sweet spirits and servant's hearts.

Yours in Christ,  
The Cernas

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# THE CERNA FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

January 2015

Dear praying friends,

The beginning of the year has brought many blessings both in our family and in the ministry. We are thankful for what God is doing in the lives of many of the church members and for how He continues to open doors for us to reach others with the Gospel.

Just two weeks ago, one of the missionaries that our church supports (Rubén Darío González) came to one of our services to preach. He and his family have been serving in Romania for about 20 years. To the best of anyone's knowledge, they were the first Latin American Spanish family to serve as Baptist missionaries in Eastern Europe. It is always a great blessing to see a Salvadoran family being greatly used of God. My prayer is that the members of our church would be so impacted by God's call in their lives, that our church will finally send missionaries to the furthest regions of the world.

The church Bible institute has started its first quarter of the year, and there are 5 men enrolled. Please pray for three of these men who will graduate at the end of this year if they pass the remaining course work. These men are preaching regularly at the church, and we are excited at the prospect of starting another church in this city sometime in the future. We also ask you to pray that God would bring more men to the institute, and who will surrender their lives to do what God wants them to do.

We are also thankful for how God is allowing us to see people receive Christ. About 2 months ago, the ex-husband of a lady who had been a member of our church for a few years came to visit for a Wednesday evening service. None of us had ever met him before, and did not know who he was when he came. While dealing with him after the service, we found out that he had come with the purpose of receiving Christ as his Savior! Since he received Christ, he has been faithfully attending services, and Steve has started the discipleship course with him. Please pray for this man (Juan Ricardo Arévalo) and for our church as we are in the process of knocking on 20,000 doors this year. We praise God that we have already seen 4 professions of faith from these efforts, and we pray that many of these decisions turn out to be disciples for Christ.

The school year starts in January here, and our kids were excited to get back and start a new year. Caleb is in preparatory, the equivalent of first grade. Rosa started fourth grade. Joshua is homeschooling with Christine. We have found that it is best to give our kids a good base in the English language before we send them to a Spanish speaking school. Our prayer is that they will have mastery over both languages. We are amazed at the strides Caleb and Rosa have made in being able to communicate and understand the culture here. Since English is their first language, it makes us laugh when they naturally do something very Salvadoran (a gesture or an expression) without even thinking about it. Please continue to pray for us as we raise our kids. Thank you for your continued prayers.

Serving Christ in El Salvador,  
The Cerna Family

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

October 2014

Dear Praying Friends,

It is hard to believe we are already halfway through October. The weather has become cooler here, a nice change of pace for us. When I say cool, I mean the temperature dips to the low 70's at night. At this time of year, we begin to reflect on how the year has passed, and we focus on what God has done.

We celebrated our church's 6-year-anniversary on October 4. We had a special speaker come, and enjoyed cake as a church family. The Ladies Ministry organized a special choir for the celebration. Some of the ladies said that they wanted to thank God for all He has done, and a great way to do that would be through a song of thanksgiving. It was a memorable day for all of us.

Developing preachers is something that we have been praying for and working towards since the beginning. Although it has been a long road with lots of disappointments, we can say that it was worth all of the effort over the past six years. We now have four men who have been trained to preach through the Bible Institute. They take turns preaching every once in a while, and we feel that it is a time of excitement in our church. Our people are catching the vision that God can use anyone for His work. We have quite an assortment of men that are training in the Bible Institute. Some do not have a high school education; others have a difficult time reading; others have dark pasts. But through these men, our church sees directly that education and position are not what matters to God. Steve was invited to preach at a sister church in another city here in El Salvador. He was able to accept the invitation without hesitation, knowing the men could take care of our church service that Sunday. This is a big part of our heart's burden; please pray for these men to continue developing into what God wants them to be.

In El Salvador, the school year ends October 31. Our kids are getting excited that there is only a little bit of school left, then they have the equivalent of what is summer break in the States. They will start a new school year in January. We are thankful for the opportunity to put our kids in a good school here, it has helped Caleb considerably. In his first year at school, his Spanish has developed at an incredible speed. He has picked up so much by being immersed in the language. Rosa is finishing up third grade, the equivalent of fourth grade in the States, and in another year, Joshua will start school. We are so thankful that, for the most part, our kids fit in with other children here. Because of their abilities with Spanish, they do not deal with being the "foreigners" around other children. This helps make our job a little bit easier. Please continue to pray for our kids. As all of you parents know, there are always challenges to raising kids properly.

Thank you for your prayers for us and our church people. We know that these prayers fuel us to keep going forward.

Serving Christ in El Salvador,

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## MISSIONARIES IN EL SALVADOR

August 2014

Dear Praying Friends,

It is with great thankfulness that we write this letter. In the last couple of months, the Lord has provided us with countless blessings both in the ministry and with our family. Of course we want to share these with you, and mention some critical prayer requests as well.

First of all, we want to thank God for Parkview Baptist Church in Palm Coast, Florida. This church brought a group of teens with them on a mission's trip. In just one week the group painted a large portion of our church building, had a two-night children's activity, and a teen activity. Our church is always blessed whenever a group comes from the States. It always gives us the opportunity to see more visitors (as they're curious to see the Americans) come to church, and to minister to more people.

Over the past few years, it has been a bit of a struggle to get people baptized because of how impractical the pool we have used is. Thankfully, we've finally found a solution to this issue. Three weeks ago Steve got together with three other men of our church and they built a baptistry for a fairly inexpensive price that looks like it will last. It is always a blessing when church members come together to take care a need. As a result, we will be celebrating baptisms at the end of the month. Please pray that Douglas, Herlinda, Wendy, Valeria, Jessica and Berenice will continue to grow and serve the Lord after their baptism.

The church's evangelistic efforts have remained strong. Right now, our church is averaging about 4,000 tracts distributed per month, and about 200 people hear the gospel by our soul winners each month. A few weeks ago, Steve was knocking on doors about five blocks from our church and a man named William Pacheco received Christ as his Savior. What was particularly special about this profession of faith was that William prayed on his own to receive Christ! Please pray that he would grow in the Lord and that we will continue to find those that are ready to receive salvation.

Last time, we shared the story of Douglas, the twelve-year-old with cancer. When the biopsy results were finally available (they were two weeks late), the doctors told Douglas that he in fact did NOT have cancer! They are waiting on a few more tests to come in, but it looks like he is going to be fine. He found out on Wednesday afternoon and was in church that night to give a testimony of God's strength through a big trial. Please continue to pray for the spiritual growth of Douglas, his mother Herlinda, and for his brother David. Please pray for the salvation of Douglas' father, Alberto.

Our family is doing well. The excitement of having a church come visit is a highlight of the year for our kids, so they have been quite happy. We have also been feeling grateful for our health. With so many people sick around us, we know we should not take our health for granted. Thank you for praying for Steve's mother. Her cancer treatments are complete. She will have tests done in the near future to see if the results are favorable. Please continue to pray for her as she recovers from very strong treatments. Please pray for good news from the doctors. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support for our family and ministry.

Steve Cerna

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