

March 2021

MISSIONS

El Salvador Experiencing God's Guidance and Provision

New Zealand
Delayed Travel
Brings Blessings

Romania
Faith and Frisbee





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY DR. SCOTT WALT

Spiritual Grandparents

They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (Psalm 92:14–15)

A few years ago, my wife, Leslie, and I received a call from a young couple who said they were at the end of their rope. They poured out a tale of woe, beginning when the woman's mother died and continuing with other life crises. Their marriage was struggling, their spiritual lives were dry as dust, and their hope was gone. They pushed themselves to read the Bible and pray, but it made them feel worse. What were they to do?

They were not expecting the answer I offered. I said, "You need parents." Theirs had passed away or were unavailable, and their lives were too challenging to handle alone. Leslie replied that she would be willing to be a mother to the woman and a grandmother to her child. I added that I would participate in the roles of father and grandfather. Thus, began a new chapter in all our lives.

Grandparents have always had an important role to play in society and in the local church. Often, as believers age, we naturally transition from carrying the bulk of the work and responsibility to more advisory and support roles. Our wisdom has grown as our energy has decreased.

From the beginning, Leslie and I prepared our four children to someday live on their own—to be responsible for themselves and lead their own families with a healthy, limited amount of support from us. We used these same principles and training methods in our local assembly. We taught, trained, and gradually, gave the young people in our assembly more responsibility.

Eventually, the time came to send them out to start or serve in new works. As they matured, the time also came for me to step out of my leadership role in the home assembly. I was 53 years old.

At that point, we wondered what we should do now. Do we become spiritual parents again and raise a new spiritual family? No, we were ready to serve as spiritual grandparents. But how does that actually work?

First, when forming a new family, a man must "leave" father and mother (Matthew 19:5). In this case, the Lord led us to be the ones who would voluntarily give up our role so that a new spiritual family could form. After much prayer and discussion with the elders, we decided that even though we had left our leadership roles, we would stay in the assembly and serve as spiritual grandparents.

Second, in our discussions with the elders and, then, the entire church, we committed ourselves to submit and serve under the current leadership. We also encouraged the rest of the congregation never to come to us with issues and concerns that should be addressed to the elders.

Third, we determined that, as spiritual grandparents, we would treat the elders like we do our adult children: They can come to us for counsel or help at any time, but it must be at their initiative. What they do with it is up to them. We would also encourage them in their personal lives and marriages and ensure they get the rest and refreshment they need. We would confront and correct believers in the assembly who treat the elders with disrespect. Our priority would be to support them and the other young leaders so that they can do the work well. In today's language, we would have the elders' backs.

We have been in this role for nine years. Now, we are "grandparenting," or "grandmentoring," leaders from other churches too. We also encourage and train other seniors to assume the role of spiritual grandparents.

As for the young couple I mentioned at the beginning, Leslie offered to take their child one day per week if they would use that day for personal refreshment and to work on their marriage. They agreed. That was nearly three years ago. Last Saturday, they picked up their children (yes, plural) after another blessed day together. Their marriage is strong, and they are serving the Lord. All they needed were grandparents. ■

Dr. Scott Walt serves in Austria.

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FRONT COVER: Nahuizalco, El Salvador—©iStockPhoto.com/edfuentesg

BACK COVER: Cascais, Portugal—Deb Spinelli





From CANADA to EL SALVADOR



FOLLOWING GOD'S GUIDANCE, EXPERIENCING HIS PROTECTION AND PROVISION

BY ALAN CLARK

Late in the summer of 1999, my wife, Diana, and I experienced several changes in our lives. Spiritually, we were praying that the Lord would lead us to a ministry in which we could serve together in a common spiritual effort. Despite prayer and desire, we could see no direction. Then, one phone call from a believer in an assembly in Manitoba, Canada, changed everything.

His request: Could we drive a school bus loaded with supplies from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to some missionaries in El Salvador? We felt it was an answer to our prayers. He gave us two days to be ready but then extended the departure date by a week.

GOING WHERE GOD LEADS

To describe the full activities of that trip would fill a complete report. Suffice it to say, we had several life-threatening experiences on our way through Mexico. The Lord preserved us, and we arrived safely in El Salvador. We spent about 10 days traveling around the country, visiting Christians and helping Craig Saword (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 15) with some mechanical repairs.

We left El Salvador in a damaged van that needed to be taken to the US for major repairs. We arrived home safely, but only after experiencing parasites for the first time, which made Diana quite sick. At the end of the trip, my statement was: "an experience never to be repeated."

However, the Lord had a different plan for Diana and me. Over the next four years, we made two more trips by bus and some by air as the Lord showed us the need for physical and spiritual work in El Salvador. After three years of praying, God's words in John 20:21 convinced us of His leading: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." With the fellowship of the believers in Kapuskasing, Ontario, we were commended to the Lord's work in El Salvador—the work the Lord had called us to.



From top: School buses, which the Clarks helped drive down from Canada and the US, play a vital role in gathering Christians for assembly activities; Food distribution supports Christians in western El Salvador; Nursing students at the Sonsonate Hospital receive Bibles.

We asked the Lord to guide us to a ministry of our own.

In the summer of 2004, we packed our essentials and clothing in a Nissan pickup and started our drive—first to Texas, where we would meet Craig Saword, and then to El Salvador, to begin our life there.

From language to culture and customs, everything was a contrast to our way of life in Canada. For example, driving had rules, but they were ignored. If there was a spot on the road, you took it. At times, it was a thrilling experience.

We spent the first two years mostly helping the existing work in San Salvador and learning the language. Alan also preached occasionally, with John “Jack” Saword (MPH Day 15) interpreting for him. At the end of the second year, we asked the Lord to guide us to a ministry of our own.

SEEKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

After a couple of expeditions, we made one assembly in Acajutla the center of our work in western El Salvador. In the Acajutla area, three assemblies existed, and they were within one to one-and-a-half hours of our home in San Salvador.

For the first year of our work there, we encouraged the believers with God’s Word and, at the same time, assessed several elderly Christians’ needs. Using her background as a school nurse in the public health system, Diana evaluated their health problems and tried to seek relief for them with the help of a local doctor—balancing the need for food and medicine with that of spiritual help and encouragement.

We also involved ourselves in the assembly meetings. I helped teach and instruct the elders in their work and responsibilities. Diana started a sewing class for the women to make baby blankets and baby clothes.

We found an open door to distribute these items in the Sonsonate Hospital, about 30 minutes from the Acajutla assembly. Once per month, we visited the hospital to distribute the baby items, along with gospel texts and literature, in the main maternity ward. This ministry created the opportunity for visitation in all the hospital wards, using gospel texts and *Via* magazines. In time, we received many requests for Bibles.

In San Salvador, we found a book store where we could buy Bibles by the case at a reasonable price. We started taking a case of 32 Bibles with us each time we visited the hospital, but soon, we realized one case was not enough.

One head nurse requested a set for her student nurses and promised to use them. A man who worked in the hospital pharmacy told us he had a small church but no Bibles—not a single complete Bible among the congregation. They would take the pages of the Scripture passage he was going to preach from

and photocopy the verses. As a result, we brought him one or two Bibles each visit.

Another time, a woman from the assembly was in the hospital for surgery, and a woman in the next bed was reading a Bible, one we had distributed. After some conversation, our sister realized that the woman had recently received Christ as her Savior. What an encouragement!

We saw several police officers in the hospital guarding injured gang members, and several of them asked for Bibles. Then, taxi drivers outside the hospital began asking for Bibles. Eventually, we brought two cases, containing approximately 70 Bibles total, on each visit.

A new door opened just before we came home for a short visit in the fall of 2019. A nurse introduced Diana to another maternity ward at the back of the main hospital—an in-and-out service mostly for young women who have limited financial means. The nurse asked Diana if she could provide clothing for the babies, who often develop bronchial problems as they move from the air conditioning to the outside heat when they are discharged. Women from the assembly quickly made 100 blankets and some diapers and shirts.



ACCEPTING CHANGES

We have been involved in the hospital work for more than 12 years. During the same years, we encouraged local Christians, helping with the assembly’s Sunday school, yearly conference, and special monthly meetings. These Christians live difficult lives due to unemployment and gang activity, which create a constant element of fear.

After three years, we decided to move from San Salvador, where our home was, to Acajutla. This move would enable us to be closer to the people from the assemblies in the area, and it would reduce our driving time on the dangerous highways.

Following our move, we continued our work in Acajutla as usual, but we also became involved with the children and adults in our neighborhood, distributing food, medicine, clothing, and Christian literature. As good a ministry as it was, it also created a problem.

One night, a group of young men approached me as I was leaving for a meeting. They demanded money, and when I refused to pay them, they threatened my life. I was able to drive

away, somewhat disturbed by the threat, but when I returned home, I discovered a sign painted on our garage door indicating the gang's intent: no money, then death. This threat was not uncommon, but our neighbors and the assembly's elders advised us to leave immediately.

We stayed six more days, but we did not leave the house or open a door. Finally, we went to a hotel in the city of Sonsonate and stayed there for a month, going only to meetings and not returning to our house. Eventually, we decided to move from Acajutla back to San Salvador, where we could live with security guards and protection for our house.

WAITING ON THE LORD

After the move, our work in Acajutla continued and extended to many families in the Amatal and El Carmen areas, where we regularly distributed food to families in need. We also supplied medical and material help for Christians in this area. I began a Sunday afternoon study group with four young men from the Acajutla assembly.

Their eagerness to learn God's Word encouraged us, and we pray their desire will continue throughout their lives. Diana engaged in a Scripture memory work



class with a group of women. Some of the women could not read, but with the help of their children and grandchildren, they learned many passages of Scripture.

We returned to Canada in February 2020 to renew our medical insurance and gather supplies for the Christians and the hospital work. We booked our return tickets for March 16. A few days before our flight, the COVID-19 outbreak in El Salvador closed the airport we were scheduled to fly into.

We are waiting upon God, since the virus is rampant in El Salvador. We pray for and support the needs of the many Christians in the assemblies in the western part of the country. We value your prayers too. ■



Alan and Diana Clark are commended from Kapuskasing Gospel Hall in Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada.



Opposite page: Diana holds one of the newborns at the hospital. **This page (left):** Alan leads a Bible study for young men in Acajutla; **(above from top)** Believers gather for a monthly meeting in Mizata, near Acajutla; At a conference in Amatal, food fuels the body while spiritual teaching fuels the soul; At a conference in 2019, commended workers Jack and Lilian Saword, the Clarks, Helen Griffin (MPH Day 15), Kevin and Patricia Flett (MPH Day 15), and Craig Saword celebrate 50 years since the work in El Salvador began; In Diana's memory work class, even the women who cannot read learned passages of Scripture.



DELAYED TRAVEL BRINGS UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

Meeting Colombian Ex-Refugees in New Zealand

BY BILL LOUDON JR.

Finding Colombian refugees living in Invercargill, New Zealand, was a surprise for me, to say the least. Angela and I had been on furlough in New Zealand, Angela's home country, since December 2019. In early 2020, we took a couple of weeks off for a sightseeing tour of New Zealand's South Island. In Queenstown, after we gave a presentation on our ministry in Colombia, someone approached us and asked if we knew about the Colombian refugees in Invercargill, a remote town at the southern tip of this remote country. We had no idea, and we had spent a day there three days prior!

Sadly, our tight itinerary would not allow us to go back. Later, I made contact with Reuben and Evelyn Smith, who live in Invercargill and speak Spanish. They host a weekly Bible study for the refugees and invited me to teach in Spanish by video conferencing from where we were staying on the North Island. I did so, and I spent hours online with some of them.

A surprising opportunity

We planned to leave New Zealand in May 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic changed our plans. We wouldn't return to Colombia until January 2021. Due to our unexpected extra time in New Zealand, I was able to visit the Colombians three times. As I traveled more than 700 miles to see them in person for the first time, I reflected on our common bond through the Spanish language and Colombian culture—a shared experience of places, events, and customs. But did I really know them? Who were these people who had settled in this faraway country, these "lucky" few claiming refugee status to fulfill a dream held by millions in devastated nations around the world?

Past experiences

The Colombians who came to the Bible studies I taught during my visits were eager to listen and learn. They were strengthened in their faith and love and expressed gratitude for the study times, when we meditated on Jesus and the Gospel. We also shared meals. They contributed food and expertise, acquiring ingredients—some imported, some improvised—to create nearly perfect replicas of Colombian cuisine.

I visited them in their homes, and over black coffee and toasted cheese sandwiches or cornmeal patties, I listened to their stories. Several were once subsistence farmers, caught in the crossfire of Colombia's decades-long armed conflict between government forces, leftist guerrillas, and mercenaries hired by powerful landowners. They lost family members and ancestral plots of land. Some experienced unimaginable traumas that they only hinted at or shared, almost casually, in an unguarded moment. I tried not to show on my face the horror welling up in my heart as they told me their stories.

Others came from urban environments, living in slums—the overflow from the armed conflict and economic crises—and scraping out a living on the teeming streets of Colombia's major cities. Fear from seeing what was happening to their family and friends drove them to escape with their families, taking almost nothing with them and leaving almost nothing behind. Others once owned properties and businesses but fled for their lives after refusing to cooperate with the demands the guerrillas or mercenaries made.



New lives as ex-refugees

To seek refugee status, people must leave Colombia and apply from another country. Typically, Colombians do so from the neighboring country of Ecuador. Often, they must wait there for two years or more, hoping that the immigration department of a refugee-receiving nation may take an interest in their case and offer them protection after an exhaustive interview and investigation process. Of course, success is not guaranteed, and the number of applicants exceeds the combined quotas of all the countries accepting refugees.

Rumors swirl that a few of the Colombians in New Zealand have managed to cheat the system and would not qualify as “refugees” under any reasonable definition. As a result, the Red Cross workers and local volunteers who support the Colombians as they resettle question whether it’s worth trying to help them at all. I did not meet anyone who has done that, but the rumors may be true.

About two years ago, New Zealand began placing some of the incoming Colombians in Invercargill. Colombia is the only Spanish-speaking country from which New Zealand accepts refugees, giving them immediate residency and a quick path to citizenship. The Colombian immigrants consider themselves “ex-refugees,” and the government regards them as such, which provides them with everything they need for a new start, including medical care, English classes for adults, schooling for children, and subsidized housing and food as needed.

New Zealanders from this part of the country appreciate initiative, hard work, and perseverance. They are happy to welcome the ex-refugees, offer them jobs, and do what they can to help them settle. Indeed, the ex-refugees are given a new life, a rare opportunity, yet they face significant challenges.

Unique challenges

Financially, many lived from day to day in Colombia, and here, some have fallen prey to illegal predatory lending schemes, with disastrous consequences. Some fail to understand the importance of obeying the law in a country like New Zealand. Homesickness, lingering anxieties, or post-traumatic stress disorder may affect them as they adjust to their new circumstances, leading some to alcohol or drug abuse.

Teenagers are particularly at risk. Finding themselves uprooted and transplanted, some lose their moral and spiritual



From top: Colombian ex-refugees José and María (pictured with some of their family) enjoy their second Christmas in New Zealand [photo by Reuben Smith]; On Friday nights, the Smiths and a few ex-refugees study the Bible and share Colombian food [photo by Evelyn Smith]; Bill teaches a Bible study in Spanish to a group of Colombians living in Invercargill [photo by Angela Loudon]; Andrea Murrell (second on the left, pictured with her parents, son, and daughter-in-law) helps ex-refugees adjust to life in New Zealand.

foundations. Tragically, a few become victims to other Colombians who have been in New Zealand longer and know how to exploit their weaknesses.

Along with Bible teaching, discipleship, counseling, and not least, evangelism, much pastoral care is needed among the ex-refugees. Several churches provide spiritual and practical support as they are able, but the language barrier is a challenge. Members of these churches take Spanish classes and offer English classes to reach out to the ex-refugees. Reuben and Evelyn host the weekly Bible study in Spanish. Andrea Murrell, a Colombian married to a New Zealander, established a nonprofit organization to help the ex-refugees and other Colombian immigrants with practical matters.

Prayers for the future

On the flight back to the North Island after the final visit, I felt like I was leaving the ex-refugees behind. It was time for me to prepare to return to Colombia. But I was comforted that the Lord knows their needs, and He has people in New Zealand ready to help. Please pray for these Colombian

Over black coffee and toasted cheese sandwiches or cornmeal patties, I listened to their stories.

ex-refugees as they face the challenges of resettling in New Zealand. And please remember to pray for the many more desperate Colombians who have not received opportunities like this. My desire is that, one day, all Colombians may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent (John 17:3). ■



Bill and Angela Loudon are commended from Westminster Bible Chapel in Westminster, California, and Mount Bible Chapel in Tauranga, New Zealand.

June 4-11, 2021

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M O P

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Helping prepare those considering missions to be effective on the mission field.

Visit www.CMML.us/mop for more information and to register.

Faith and Frisbee



REACHING ROMANIA THROUGH A SPORTS MINISTRY

BY PABLO CALDERON

When my wife, Bethany, and I first moved to Brasov, Romania, in 2016, we had a clear ministry goal in mind. We were going to focus on music ministry. With our coworkers and friends, Daniel and Georgiana Eakins (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 13), we formed The Ineloquent and, over the years, released several praise-and-worship albums. It remained our main ministry for our first three years of service. While we are still heavily involved in music ministry, God opened a new, unique door: Ultimate Frisbee.

Transylvania Ultimate Frisbee

Better known as "Ultimate," this noncontact sport is played with a Frisbee disc. Like American football, to score a point, a team must pass the Frisbee down the field until it reaches the opponent's end zone. One of the unique things about Ultimate is that it is self-officiated, meaning that all players on the field also serve as referees. Ultimate can be played in three different forms: men's teams, women's teams, and mixed teams (the most common).

Our Ultimate club is called Transylvania Ultimate Frisbee, or TUF. The beginnings of Ultimate in Brasov trace back to 2013, when the Eakins arrived in Romania, as another way Daniel could fellowship with young adults on Sunday evenings. After Bethany and I arrived in 2016, the local American school invited me to introduce the sport to its students. By 2019, we discovered other Eastern European Ultimate teams that were playing in tournaments. We decided to combine Daniel's young adult group and my student group to create our own team, which became known as TUF. So, in April 2019, I cofounded the club with Daniel and another American we met at a local church.

We began to organize formal weekly training sessions for TUF's Senior (adult) and U17 (under 17) teams. Shortly after, we added more teams to include children as young as three years old (TUF Little Kids) and adults in the 50-plus age range. Soon, we had more than 100 players. When we saw this great response from our local community, the Lord made it clear to us that TUF is an opportunity for outreach, mentoring, and discipleship.

Currently, the club has two mixed teams (Senior and U17) that compete in tournaments. Lord willing, in 2021, we will add a women's team that can also compete in tournaments. In March 2020, we hosted our first indoor tournament, and teams from around the country and Bulgaria participated. Our Senior team finished in second place, and U17 took fifth place. We plan to add two or three more regional tournaments in 2021.

A sport of honor

Ultimate is a sport driven by honor. It encourages the players to respect one another, which helps them realize that each player has value and they themselves are valuable. This aspect of Ultimate reminds us of Matthew 10:31: "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."



Besides honoring one another on the field, we seek to extend it to our relationships with the players off the field. We mentor them and serve each other when needs arise. The teenage players have benefited from this the most. We also hold Bible studies with the youth. The studies began during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns after several young people expressed interest in learning more about God. During the lockdown, we regularly held a Bible study and game time over Zoom. Now, we meet in person weekly.

We have also been able to partner with another ministry called Glittr, based in Bucharest. This organization hosts day and weekend retreats to encourage teenage girls to grow in their faith and find their identity in Christ. Once per year, Glittr meets with the girls who participate in TUF and provides fun activities, like pedicures, for them while sharing the Gospel or a biblical challenge (depending on the girls' faith).

Learning to pivot

Like many ministries, we have had to make changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to concern for the virus, the number of participants has decreased by half. We paused training for children under 12 years old and for adult beginners, because, with them, following the guidelines that our local health department imposed is difficult.

Despite all tournaments being canceled until this spring, we have been able to host joint training sessions with other teams from Romania and Bulgaria. These sessions have been an awesome opportunity to encourage the players from these teams and our own.

For us, the biggest takeaway from the pandemic has been the opportunity to study and share God's Word with the participants. We explain to them that no matter what is happening in the world around us, we can trust completely in Jesus. As John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Initially, Ultimate was something for us to do after long days and weeks of ministry work. But the Lord has turned it into a

field of numerous ministry opportunities to reach our community, as well as those outside of our city, with the Gospel. May He be glorified through this work! ■



Pablo and Bethany Calderon are commended from Creekside Church in Urbandale, Iowa.

The Lord is working through TUF's ministry, and we appreciate your prayers for it. Please pray for:

- Wisdom as we navigate this new work, especially during the pandemic (local and national laws change almost weekly).
- Health for everyone involved in TUF as we meet for training each week.
- Opportunities for more Bible studies and retreats.
- Saving knowledge and salvation for the players.
- A sister in the faith to mentor and disciple the girls on our teams and run the women's training sessions.

Bottom row (L-R): The Senior and U17 teams pose for a photo after their first indoor tournament; The Calderons' oldest daughter, Carolina, enjoys Frisbee practice; Pablo teaches the students some Ultimate plays; At the weekly Bible study, members of the U17 team add spiritual exercises to their growing Ultimate skills. **Top:** During a tournament in Bulgaria, a TUF player leaps to catch the Frisbee.



CMML'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

4 Ways to Engage

As we launch CMML's 100th anniversary, we want to use it as an opportunity to celebrate—not to celebrate an organization but to celebrate God's faithfulness to CMML through dedicated senders, servants, and supporters. Through this celebration, we seek to rekindle, equip, and inspire a new generation of believers to serve the Lord at home and around the world. We invite you to take advantage of CMML's many resources to learn more about how the Lord is building His church. Here are four ways to engage with CMML:

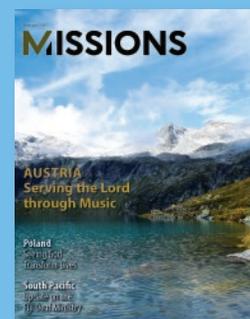
1 Missionary Prayer Handbook

Using the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* (MPH), you can pray for assembly missionaries each day of the month. The 2021 MPH features 725 missionaries serving in more than 80 countries. In celebration of CMML's 100th anniversary, we will send a free copy of the 2021 MPH to US donors who give a donation of any kind in 2021. You can order additional copies or purchase a copy apart from the special offer at CMML.us/2021mph. For Canadian orders, contact Gospel Folio Press at GospelFolio.com.



2 Missions Magazine

Missions magazine is produced 11 times per year and mailed to readers in the US and Canada. *Missions* keeps readers aware of what God is doing around the world through news from missionaries, feature articles, and excerpts of letters and emails received from missionaries. Readers in the US can receive a free subscription by visiting CMML.us/magazine/subscribe. Readers in Canada can contact MSC Canada for a paid subscription at MSCCanada.org/missions-magazine.



3 Social Media

Follow CMML on social media to stay up to date with the latest news and events. You can find CMML (@cmmlus) on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Like our posts and share them with your friends to encourage prayer and spread the news about how Christ is building His church through CMML missionaries.



4 Conferences and Events

Find information about the conferences and events CMML hosts at CMML.us/events. To learn more about the Missionary Orientation Program planned, Lord willing, for June 2021, visit CMML.us/mop. And be sure to join us for our Zoom prayer meetings every second and fourth Friday of the month.

