



The Olive Tree

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALEMÁN FAMILY

But I am like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of
God; I trust in God's
unfailing love for ever
and ever. Ps. 52:8

Seville, SPAIN

January, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Once again our intended December newsletter finally gets finished in January. We thank the Lord for this opportunity to greet you in the new year, and we pray that forevermore "...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7).

Ministry and Life During Lockdown

As we remember pre-pandemic times of meeting together each week to remember our Lord Jesus Christ, regular mid-week Bible studies, fellowship meals, evangelistic park days, occasional baptisms, and personal visits, we long for being able to gather regularly together at one place again. In the meantime, we thank our Heavenly Father for the ways He has allowed us to draw closer to Him, and to maintain fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In March, the government-mandated home confinement led our assembly to resolve the **logistics of meeting online** so that no individual would be excluded. We are glad that our deaf brother can participate by a separate connection in which we provide sign language interpreting. We are also pleased that three people who don't have internet service join us audibly by phone.



Gloria learning to use the smart phone for videoconferencing and sharing the Gospel with extended family.

Our nonagenarian sister in Christ, with limited mobility due to her broken hip that never healed well, felt even more **isolated** when the pandemic struck. Unable to meet with the church, and lacking the technology to attend virtual meetings, Tracy set her up with a smart phone, so she has been able to join in our mid-week videoconference prayer meetings as well as the daily devotional meetings of her own assembly. She continues to **express gratitude for the smart phone**, which has opened a whole new means of connecting with the saints as well as with extended family. In her solitude, she is enjoying fresh **opportunities to share the Gospel**. Recently she asked a sister in Christ to make an evangelistic sign for her to hang on her balcony declaring: *Only Christ Saves – Acts 4:12.*

It is a privilege to help this sister in Christ in practical ways, especially during the pandemic, and it is a joy to see the Lord continuing to work through her life as she desires to glorify her Savior.

In spite of being impeded by intermittent lockdowns, laws limiting the size of groups, and a meeting place which does not permit social distancing, our fellowship with the saints has grown stronger in some respects, as we **strive to reach out to each other in creative ways**, and as we adjust to carry on the ministries the Lord has entrusted us.

One event that deeply touched our hearts was death of our dear brother in Christ, **Miguel**. He formed an integral part of our church, and we all miss him dearly. The Lord received Miguel into His presence hours after his open-heart surgery in early September. Manuel had the privilege of sharing an **evangelistic message at his memorial service**. Since attendance was limited to 25 people due to the pandemic, we recorded the service and produced a **video** that the family was able to share with relatives and friends who were not able to attend. We continue to pray for Miguel's wife, son, daughter, and granddaughters as they adjust to his absence. Notably in the months leading up to his operation, which was postponed during the first wave of the pandemic, Miguel made evident his trust in the Lord's will regarding the outcome of the surgery. **He was ready to meet his Savior.**

As our assembly continues to meet online, we were pleased that **Jacobo** was able to join two of our Sunday videoconferences (pictured here) recently during a couple of weekend releases from prison. Although we anticipated his **permanent release** in December, the paperwork should be finalized in January, Lord willing. The believers look forward to enjoying fellowship with Jacobo at a local park when his freedom is granted. He plans to work in his brother's business, and has no desire whatsoever to return to his former drug-dealing lifestyle. **He wants to live for Christ.**



During some periods when we have not been restricted to house or town confinement, we thank the Lord for the **opportunity to visit** some of the families from our church. We share with you some photos of these visits, where you see that in Spain we are required to wear masks in public.



During the pandemic, we came to realize the increased **isolation deaf people are experiencing**, as masks make communication much more difficult, and as public services offered by phone or videoconference are not suitable to the deaf or hearing-impaired. Manuel was able to **visit our deaf brother** occasionally between the regional lockdowns, since he lives in another province 45 minutes away. Manuel has also connected with him by sign language in personal videoconferences.



Although we have spent more time at home throughout the pandemic, each of us has kept quite busy. Manuel was able to finish up some **editing** work as he carefully revised translations of Bible courses, fixing errors or inaccuracies in the translations. He began **discipling two brothers** who are taking on more leadership roles in our assembly, as they are sharing in the preaching ministry. He works with each brother individually, offering seminary-level training in Bible study methods and preparing biblically-based messages. We thank the Lord for this opportunity to **build up the leadership of the church**, and look to Him to bring fruit from these efforts.

Tracy has also kept busy during the concentrated phases at home. In April and May she prepared a **celebration video** for the 30th anniversary of the publication of the women's magazine, *Caminemos Juntas*. Having received short video contributions from the directors, writers, administrators, audio magazine team, distribution teams and representatives, Tracy compiled them all, along with some historical photos and ministry highlights. We published the celebration video on the web as a virtual celebration in lieu of the two planned celebrations we had to cancel in Seville and Buenos Aires.



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Family News

Lucas also kept himself occupied when he began two **online courses** in August through **LeTourneau University**. Although he planned to start his freshman year on campus in fall of 2020, after much consideration and prayer regarding the pandemic and related implications, especially travelling from overseas, we decided it would be best to start online. In December, Lucas finished two fall online classes, and in January he started two more during spring term. We are glad that this school year he is able to start working toward his computer engineering degree through LeTourneau. Lucas is glad to fulfill some of his general credits this year and is looking forward to moving onto campus in August of 2021, as the Lord allows.

We also thank the Lord for His provision in **Tomás's** life in so many ways: When his campus was shut down in March due to the pandemic, his roommate's family so graciously offered to host him in their home for as long as he needed (nearly five months!). After much searching and applying for internships, the FDIC responded and offered him a **summer internship** in which he worked remotely. After returning to campus in the fall, they offered him a job upon graduation. Currently Tomás is working to finish his **senior year at Bryan College** by the end of April, then he plans to **move to Little Rock, Arkansas** to work for the FDIC.

We request your prayer:

- For **Tomás** as he graduates from college and relocates to Little Rock to begin working
- For **Lucas** as he studies online and transitions to campus in the fall
- For continued **health** to carry on our various ministries
- That **Christ may be honored**: In our personal relationship with Him, in our family, and in our local church
- That **God would guide** our upcoming decisions and travels according to His will and purposes

Once again we thank you for investing your time in reading our update and praying with us in an informed way. May the Lord bless and keep you, may each of us grow in closer fellowship with our Savior, and may His Spirit help us all to share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ in these difficult days.

**Looking to our Lord,
Manuel & Tracy**