

Live from Cieneguilla Peru

A Year in Review 2021

Dark times

A heaviness was in the air. Times were tough, the future looked bleak, and people everywhere felt discouraged. It was May of 2021, and we were in the midst of a national and spiritual crisis. After the entire nation being on lockdown for almost all of 2020, in January of 2021 things had started to open back up. Our church began to meet in person again for the first time. Then, on January 28th the government came out with a second, and more stringent waves of lockdowns for February and March with and even stricter military curfew and measures of martial law. Smack in the middle of the “homebound days” were the national presidential primary elections. Due to the COVID fears causing low voter turnout at the polls, an extreme Marxist candidate took the lead. For the next few months the vote was contested, and people were afraid for the future both politically and physically due to the constant bombardment of fear filled media. During this time churches across the country were closed, many to never re-open again. **Faith was wavering like a flickering light in a foggy night.**

In the midst of this time, I made the hardest decision of my life... to quietly re-open the church. After 1.5 years of “online only” we realized this dynamic was not effective for the times we were living in. Although it was strictly prohibited to leave your house on Sundays, we were able to change our services to Saturday night and end one hour before the military curfew, giving people time to make it home (before being arrested). For nearly two months, we met with a small gathering of people. Some outsiders had a critical spirit about this and voiced it by sending me hate messages. I realized that everyone claims to have faith until that faith has a cost. The constant spiritual battle continued to beat us down emotionally.

Hope

Finally, in the first week of June 2021, my wife and I met with our fledgling leadership team of six couples. After spending the day fasting we all gathered to talk about the situation and pray for the future. We proposed to them two options: Close the church, or re-launch. By this time we had no energy left to continue to carry it, and due to the loss financial losses of the shutdowns, our church was about to lose its building. We simply asked them to tell us what they felt the Lord leading them to do.

As each person shared, they unanimously agreed to re-launch the church.



Our leadership team

We warned them *“We cannot do this again ourselves! We don’t have the energy!”* However, that night as we prayed together the atmosphere began to change. As each couple stood up and said *“we stand with you, and we will sacrifice whatever it takes”*, I felt the darkness begin to recede and a tiny light of hope begin to shine.

The very next week we launched Sunday services again for the first time in over a year and a half. The government had somewhat lifted the restrictions (it wasn’t very clear) so we jumped in with faith and decided to let people vote with their presence. As people began to come on Sunday’s I thought that we would close down the Saturday nights, but both services began to fill up to capacity!

Strengthening

In the midst of our relaunch time, God brought us to a scripture in 1 Samuel 30:6. Here the Amalekites had raided David’s camp at Ziklag and taken all their wives and children captive, as well as stolen all of their possessions. Even though David himself had lost family members, his men were so distressed that they wanted to stone him. Yet in front of these seemingly impossible circumstances, scripture says: *“...But David Strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”*

We began a time of strengthening. Together we joined in prayer weekly with our leadership team. Worship times with the church body were a powerful time to open the altar for prayer. People came forward and fell to their knees, crying out to God. We saw an influx of new people come to the church during this time and many people give their lives to Christ. Over the next few months, we had many baptisms, and we had about 25 people graduate from our new believer’s class.



Our Men's ministry and Women's ministry began to meet again for Bible Studies, worship and prayer times. Every week these meetings would finish late into the night, as we spent time ministering to the many men and women that would break down into tears as they would be touched by the Holy Spirit. Little by little, we saw leadership arise. In the midst of this time, God led us to do something we had dreamed about for 8 years- Ordain pastors.



Since 2017, I had been working with and training men for the ministry. Yet the growth was slow and their commitment often lackluster at best. However, times of CRISIS have an interesting effect; they bring the true players to light very quickly. During the entire shutdown, I had named two men as pastoral interns. These men worked with me weekly in visiting, creating and recording devotions, and preaching at online services. In July of 2021 I felt the Lord tell me that it was time to give them the title and authority for the work that they were already completing within the body of Christ. We named Jose Manuel Brito and Carlos Yanac as pastors in August of 2021. I am proud to say that these men, with the help of their wives, have truly risen to the occasion. Although we are not able to pay them (I would love to have them as paid staff in 2022), they give of their time sacrificially for the body of Christ and are a true blessing.

Family

The emotional and physical strain of the last couple of years had really taken a toll on our family. Even though we were seeing God begin to breakthrough, it can be hard to be constantly giving out. We needed times of refreshing. We also needed time to be encouraged in our marriage and with the relationship with our children. We decided to take some time to step away and work on our family, so we traveled to the USA for the months of September and October. The ministry did fine without us, and we were able to begin to process many things that were buried in our hearts. Although it was not an easy time, we concluded that we needed to work together on unity. Unity requires work, but when we are together in unity God can work through us powerfully. We returned to Peru and spent the month of November working together as a family on this concept.

Momentum

In December, we decided it was time to pick up where our dreams had left off. Sometimes we can get so burdened under daily circumstances that we forget to do the things that we are called to do—the things that fuel our passion for serving the Lord. After a difficult year, we wanted to end with a bang! Together we presented a project to the church called “My best gift.” In this project, we asked people to give their best gift to Jesus this Christmas. Christmas is Jesus’ birthday after all, and we usually don’t give him a gift! For several weeks, we encouraged our church family to save and bring their best special offering for our Christmas project. We set a goal of \$3,000 that we wanted our people to raise to fund our Christmas outreach project, and in the end, they surpassed the goal by \$500!

These funds were used to buy supplies for three evangelistic Christmas projects. The first two events were in different areas of our community. We had over 60 volunteers serve in these events, where we gave nearly 1000 children gifts, served over 2000 people hot chocolate and fruit cakes, and our teens and children helped put on a live Christmas play and nativity scene about the real meaning of Christmas. We Preached the gospel and prayed for dozens of families at these events.



The most exciting of all was the last event, when we took a bus with 52 people (full to the brim!) up to a little town called Antioquia about 2 hours away in the mountains. This one-day mission trip was a great momentum builder and a way to end the year with excitement for the future.



New year 2022

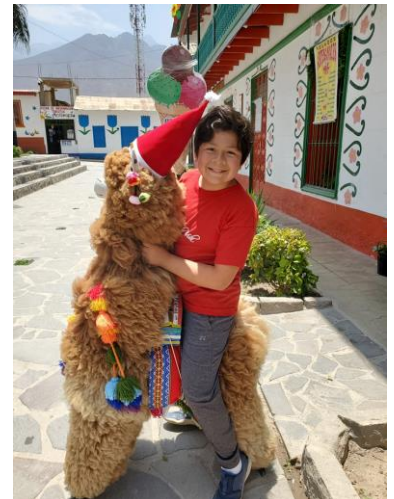
Thank you so much for your continued prayers and financial support. We ask prayers for this year as we continue to serve in Peru.

Pray for our continued spiritual growth. We find that in order to minister effectively we need to constantly be growing and remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Pray for our marriage unity and family vision. We have been working intentionally to unite in our purpose and goals for this year, but we see some changes coming in the future. Our goal this year is to continue to build systems and leadership here in a way that they will be less dependent on our involvement. We are praying about our future steps and decisions but for the time being feel that we should continue to serve in Fuente de Vida.

Pray for our children. It has been tough not having school interaction and being home a lot over the last couple of years. Although our kids are excited to be a part of the growing youth ministry, they really would like to go back to school. Schools in Peru have been closed for 2 years, but potentially could re-open in March.

Pray for Fuente de Vida. We would like to buy a piece of land in the center of town to build a ministry center to use for many years to come. This would cost us about \$250,000 for a good location.



Thank you so much! *The Wollbrink Family*

Tel. 217-298-1442

heart4peru@yahoo.com

www.heart4peru.com

