

Newsletter Date

May 2009

Familia de Dios

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Language Issues at Sherman Ave.

This month has been the most eventful month of my teaching career. That means a lot of wonderful things happened, and a lot of difficult things happened.

For the past four years I've been teaching the kids class at Sherman Ave. I teach in English, but the congregation is Spanish. The different languages have never been an issue, but the immense spiritual and numerical growth in the young people has changed the situation. The Spanish speaking adults have expressed that they feel removed and distant from the young people and somewhat out of place in their own congregation. It is true. We've been focusing so much on the young people and their spiritual needs that we haven't yet worked on fully integrating them into the church. These kids don't come from Christian homes, so they don't know what their relationship with the church should be like.

Frustrated by the division, the adults decided that there would no longer be any English classes. That is proving to be a BIG challenge. Within a single generation, all the kids prefer and better understand English. Most can understand Spanish, but have some difficulty communicating and reading in Spanish. Then there is me. I'm decent at conversational Spanish, but nowhere near being ready to teach in Spanish. After taking some Spanish classes, I quit because my schedule became so full, and I considered my Bible teaching work to be more important. Obviously now the need to learn Spanish fluently has jumped to pretty high on my priority list.

The church is so grateful for my help these past years that they decided on their own to make an exception for me.

They are allowing me to teach English on Tuesdays and have a separate English class on Sunday mornings.

These changes are challenging and sometimes feel like stumbling blocks for the young people and me, but I feel that if we work together as Christians, it will turn out for the better. The real issue isn't Spanish vs. English. The real issue is division in the church by age. That's a real problem. I wish I had better foresight to have seen this problem and addressed it earlier, but there have just been so many other extremely important things. First it was a struggle just getting the kids to come. Then it was a struggle to cultivate their own personally motivated spiritual relationship with God. Having accomplished those things with many of the young people, now we need to help them better join their Christian family and not just depend on Roger, Emily, and myself.

Now I'm focusing on being a better example to my kids. I'm attending Sherman Ave. for worship instead of going down to Amsterdam to worship where my father preaches. I am going to be leading in the worship services. I will be preparing classes to teach in the adult classes. I also bought Rosetta Stone so I can try to become fluent in Spanish. I'm hoping these efforts will help the adults and young people grow closer together. I am also talking to the men of the congregation of why I should still be able to teach the young people's class on Sunday mornings sometimes.

This month has been challenging, but the Lord is with us. We've been studying I Corinthians on Tuesday nights before any of this came up. That's pretty providential in and of itself. Consider your home congregation. Do you have young people? Do you know the young people? Do they depend on you for guidance, and do you depend on them for the future of your local congregation? We all need each other. Let's stay united!!!

Weekly Classes

Sunday:

Teach teen class at Sherman Ave. Take kids to Washington for worship and teach teen class afterwards.

Monday:

Take kids to Bible class at Rosie's.

Tuesday:

Study Mat with Chris and Mike. Study Mat with Tiff & Jess. Study OT with Anthony. Teach I Corinthians for Sherman teen class.

Wednesday

Study Mat with Vanessa. Study OT with Diana. Read with Alvin. Study Philippians with the Cruz boys.

Thursday:

Study with Marie. Study Mark with Grace. Teen class at Sherman Ave.

Friday:

Study Mat with Suweena. Study Hebrews with Bill & Kelvin and "How to Teach a Class".

Saturday:

Study with Mat Ibys. Study OT with Carol and friends. Drive kids for two classes in Fairlawn, NJ



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Young Christian of the Month



August's young Christian of the month goes to Chris Santana. Read about Chris' baptism on this same page. As I've said before, Chris just showed up again one day and decided that he was ready to take his spirituality seriously. He told me about how he used to be and that he wants to be a better person. That's how a true conversion works. Realizing that we are weak, and believing that Christ is the answer. He is very enthusiastic and focused right now. I'm anxious for him to continue growing. He's already a great leader with the limited experience he's had. The more he grows, the more valuable he'll be. Let's pray that he can stay strong this fall. Returning to school is a hard time for all my kids.

Anthony and Chris Got Baptized!!!

If you've read any of my past reports, you know about Anthony Payero. He's been coming for the past two years and has become one of the most helpful dependable young Christians I've ever worked with. His mother was baptized a few years ago, and Anthony has been coming to church with her since. Anthony grew up Catholic and has always been a believer, but he soon learned some major differences between Catholic teachings and the Bible. He's been faithful to Christ over men. He has been a good dependable young Bible student for some time now, but we were all wondering when he was going to make the final decision. We talked to him and encouraged him to forsake any desire to live a worldly life. Since, He's been a completely different person. The difference is very evident. He isn't looking back. He recently attended the leadership camp in Alabama, which he enjoyed greatly. I'm excited that he is my brother. He is a great leader and disciple of Christ.

More All Day Studies

We try to take advantage of the free time summer brings. With our kids out of school, we can have more studies more often. It's nice.

July 10: about 40 kids from all over New York and New Jersey met at the Fairlawn church building where Matt Lagrone presented a six hour study on the first eight chapters of Romans. It was good to be reminded about the need and power of our salvation.

July 20: about 30 kids met at the Sherman Ave. church building where Roger Polanco presented a six hour study on the stories of Elijah and Elisha. Studying them all at once makes it easier to picture as one continuous story.

I MOVED!

As you know, I've been seeking more financial support so I could afford to move into a new apartment. Last month God blessed me greatly. The Tustin church in California and the North Fork church in Colorado have been gracious enough to help me. God bless them. I've already found an apartment and moved. I'm happy with the apartment I've chosen. It's a great compromise between nice and livable for me and beneficial to the work. It's a relatively big one bedroom in a relatively good neighborhood. It's very well priced for the neighborhood and size (it's actually under the rent stabilized rate). One of the best things about my new apartment is that it's about four blocks away from four of my kids. I'll be seeing them even more. My apartment is spacious enough that I can have my kids sleep over more often. Roger has done that for many of our kids and it can be used as a very spiritually useful time.

Chris Santana also got baptized this past week. His cousins, Gary and Carlos, started coming to church about four years ago. He attended with them for a short while and went to camp two years, but basically showed no interest and disappeared for a while. Just recently he has come back. He went to camp this year and expressed a great desire to change. He has been faithful to attend church and any extra Bible study. We've been studying together during the week as well. He is very spiritually minded and a great leader. We have many new comers, and he's quick to correct them when they curse or take the Lord's name in vain. He was baptized this month. Now he's our brother, but there are more challenges ahead. His father isn't supportive of Chris' decision. Although his father lives in a different borough, he has become active in trying to keep Chris away from the church and growing in Christ. Satan fights a deceptive battle. Pray for Chris.

NEW YORK BUGS ME!

You might think that you only have to deal with bugs in the country, but that's not true. Bugs are a formidable foe in the city as well. Besides the infamous cockroach, all city dwellers are afraid of bed bugs, and right now there is a citywide epidemic. Find one bed bug and you'll be spending the next few weeks washing every thing you have and throwing out furniture. It happened to me last month. WHAT A PAIN IN THE NECK!

Also, the basement where we have our Bible classes at Sherman was infested with fleas. The stray cats bring them at least once a year. Rosie and Victor made wonderful classroom tents for us to use in the mean time.