

# JIM AND PHYLLIS CHILDRESS

MISSIONARIES TO PANAMA SINCE 1976

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Dear faithful rope holders,

Like a normal seasonal tradition, Easter week brings the first rains of the season that normally lasts until December. The pacific side of the mountain range nets about 165 inches of rain during that time. The Atlantic side if the country gets an additional 20 inches in a normal season.

In the area of Calovebora there is better weather in April and May. We have better weather with better sea conditions and climate change to work.

The land includes the trail route to the property. I will meet with Roderick to plan a work schedule with church members from Rio Concepción and local believers.

The last three churches I served as pastor we moved our missions conference to Holy Week, taking our Faith Promise on Resurrection Sunday. Both events end with the same theme: *We've a story to tell to the nations; that shall turn their hearts to the right; a story of truth and mercy, a story of peace and light*

Sunday morning, we returned to pastor Azael's church. The church accepted the challenge of matching their "birthday gift to Jesus offering" in December and the "30 pieces of silver offering" during Easter week. The offering is anticipated to be higher than the December offering because we matched it and a supporting church matched it as well. The "30 pieces of silver offering" I matched turned out to be \$811. We were disappointed that there was not a better enthusiastic sacrificial effort.

I was informed the owner of the property for sale is willing to finance the sale if the church has a downpayment of \$15,000. That is a special blessing because banks do not loan funds to churches when buying property or building. At present, the church has \$7,800 in the purchase fund. During my message I challenged the church to reach their goal of \$15,000 before the end of the year. Please pray for the church to catch the vision.

We have started the process to get approval to dismantle the old house we moved from after finishing the annex. Getting permission requires hiring an architect or engineer to supervise the project. After we finish dismantling the house I want to build the foundation for the replacement building. That will show us how much effort and material we will need to deal with before the construction stage. That will also give us time to submit plans and await approval.

Pastor Johniel Acosta and family needs your prayer support. They have had one challenge after another:

- 1] Unemployed for almost a year.
- 2] Limited income with a new job.
- 3] Sheyla gave birth via cesarean, and the hospital sent her home with a baby boy and a bacteria that almost took her life. Johniel really did not comprehend the significances of the

news that "everything depended on the next 24 hours."

- 4] Their newest addition to the family has had numerous health challenges and is presently hospitalized. The doctors anticipated a week stay or longer.
- 5] The financial challenge with five children, one grandma, one niece living in the house, plus one grandpa that visits most days.

This week we traveled to meet with Roderick to make plans to have volunteers spend a week in Calovebora for our first stage of land development. Men from two churches and several local believers will be participating.

The church in Belen will be starting their next stage of reconstruction. Funds have been given for that effort, but we need to make plans to reconstruct their 25-year-old boat, which the last pastor also left their outboard motor disassembled with ruined parts. I think the motor is not worth repairing and it will be necessary to get a new 40hp motor. I will have to investigate the availability of a replacement motor.

Brother Jorge will be making another trip to Belen before the annual coastal Bible conference in Rio Concepción. We will be sending some financial assistance for the conference. They normally have more than 400 in attendance for the conferences with all coastal churches participating. It is not uncommon to have non-believers attending from areas where local churches are doing evangelism.

I love the history of this church. After the start of the church in Belen, Brother Vaquez was constantly reaching out to other areas and Rio Concepción is about an hour away. Missionary Robert Creech was also doing evangelism ministry in the coastal region and used a ministry of home Bible studies. The course had 16 lessons and people were doing the lessons in Rio Concepción. One day Secundino stopped by to ask Jorge about the lesson on tithing. It seems several people wanted clarification. Secundino was satisfied and continued on his way to Colon.

Several weeks later Secundino revisited Jorge with a plastic grocery bag in hand that contained a small amount of money. Jorge asked about the money, about \$20. Secundino replied, "We do not have a church to which we can give our tithes. Your church is the closest one around." Right away Jorge volunteered to help them start a church.

My first visit to the church we met on someone's porch. The second visit, Secundino gave a hilltop lot. They had a room size tin roof with slices of a tree trunk for chairs. My next visit saw an extended roof with boards connecting the slices of tree trunks. Later came their first one story sanctuary, then a Sunday School annex building, then a kitchen area (largely open air). Later there was a two-level sanctuary with a balcony area. When Roderick oversaw the evangelism during a four-day medical clinic men in the church made an offer: "if you will come be our pastor, we will build you a house." Roderick said yes and the men kept their promise.

All of this sounds simple until you realize no one in the area has a salary, all the boards were cut with a chain saw and gasoline for the chain saw was a day's travel away. The church raised money by the men having fund raisers: they went upriver to pan for gold, all the gold found was church property. Sometimes, the activity lasted several days. I am glad to still be a partner with this work that honors our Savior. Thanks for letting me be a part of it.