

Short-Term Missions that Matter

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CBN News

On any given day, the Costa Rican village of "La Cuenca" is covered in music, not from a radio, but from a small church. The tin building's backyard is a cliff made by the runoff of trash and water from the wealthier neighborhoods some four blocks away. When we first arrived, we saw no beauty here.



The kids play soccer (or futbol as they call it) on a concrete field, anchored by dusty, brown clay and ditches full of debris. Before Pura Vida Missions (PVM), they played on dirt and often had to climb down the cliff behind their church to get the ball someone had accidentally kicked over. But just a few months before we'd gotten there, the ministry built the children a field and fence to keep their games contained.

PVM founder DeLynn Hoover gave us a tour of La Cuenca, which means "bowl" in Spanish. The seven of us – Minister Glen Guyton (group leader), Stephen Arrington, Nicole Francisco, She' Hall, Angela Byrd-Wright, Justin Wright and myself — would be working here for the next few days.

The neighborhood can only be described as a slum town. The houses are made of wood, scrap metal and leftover building supplies. Inside, families cram bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and all they need into a space that for many is no bigger than an American den. Makeshift power lines strung from corner to corner provide electricity. There's clean water in most parts, but the smell of trash lingers in the air.

One area, DeLynn just points to.

"There are a lot of gang members," he says. "You guys won't do house-to-house prayer up there. It's pretty dangerous. But we do."

A few minutes later we come across a house with three boys inside. They smile and vigorously wave at us.

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Mark Your Calendars

and prepare for an exciting time
together July 4-9, 2011

The African American Mennonite Association (AAMA) will host an event you don't want to miss on the evening of Wednesday, July 6, 2011 at the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Pittsburgh, PA. "We are the Church" day of the convention also takes place on Wednesday and will celebrate our and the other racial/ethnic groups' gifts and cultures. The entire convention will feature several speakers, presenters, singers and other participants from our diverse races and cultures.

The AAMA gathering will include spirit filled praise and worship, a drama presentation, a slide show of AAMA churches in ministry, refreshments, and more. All AAMA churches are asked to email high quality resolution jpeg images of their congregation in ministry for the slide show to aama_org@yahoo.com by January 31, 2011. Congregations that submit pictures in the requested jpeg format will be entered into a drawing for a door prize. We will have another door prize for AAMA churches that access AAMA's web page for the songs that will be sung that evening. The song selections and lyrics will be on the web site in February. Three door prizes will be given that will be great resources for AAMA churches. Churches must have a member present at the time of the drawings to win.

AAMA's Business Session also will take place on July 6th during the gathering. Bylaw amendments will need to be voted on at that time. The membership provision will be amended.

The Mennonite Church USA Convention registration begins on January 25, 2011. Late registration rates begin on April 25. Please visit <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/Home/Convention/Pittsburgh2011/tabid/1441/Default.aspx> for convention and registration information. Also visit AAMA's web site at www.aamamcusa.org for information about the AAMA gathering. We hope to see you at the convention in Pittsburgh on July 4-9, 2011 and look forward to hearing from you in the coming months.

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Short-Term Missions that Matter *continued . .*

We laugh and wave back. And in that short moment, we began to realize how the people of La Cuenca welcomed us. With our presence, they knew something good was to come.

DeLynn and his wife, Gloria, moved to Costa Rica from the U.S. in 2003 to start PVM. The group is now part of a network of missions programs called VidaNet. La Cuenca was their main project. During our six days in Costa Rica, we'd be painting the small homes we'd just encountered and praying for the people we now felt sorry for.

As our trip continued, though, our opinions of La Cuenca changed. The frowns of disgust we had for the conditions they were living in turned into smiles as we fumbled over our Spanish with the people and meshed ourselves into their culture.



Justin, who spoke the best Spanish among all of us, served as our translator when none of the other PVM team members were around. One woman was so comfortable with us, she invited Justin and Stephen to come paint the inside of her house around the corner. They agreed. On other days, we danced with a family in their living room, passed out free soda to strangers in the city park, played UNO with Raul, the local pastor, and prayed for a one-legged man who'd fallen ill and his grandson who was headed off to trade school.

"It's a crazy, do-whatever-needs-to-be-done kind of schedule," says Lyndon Bontrager, director of one of PVM's outreach programs called DaVida. "Almost everything is ministry-related."

By just interacting with the people of La Cuenca, we were ministering. And in a way, they were ministering to us as well. Every morning at our camp, we gathered with the others for fellowship and prayer, and every evening before bed, the seven of us met to talk about how we'd been inspired that day. Each night, our conversations grew more intimate. Even in the few days of missions in Costa Rica, we'd discovered the power of discipleship and why it matters.

DeLynn urged us to, "Die to ourselves, be intimate with the Father and bear fruit."

Lyndon, his wife and two kids demonstrated the power of family and how a life of service can be rewarding.

And Dan "The Man" Hertgers – a young Canadian who'd joined PVM and drove us to all our service projects – showed us that our relationship with God could be

strengthened through the talents he gives us, which for him was music.

How ironic that our church is named Calvary Community. As our group landed back in Virginia for the ride home – we had PVM and the people of La Cuenca to thank for a better understanding of what the "community" of God's people is all about.

Early this year seven young adults from Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Virginia served in Costa Rica, Central America. They returned with a renewed passion for God and His people. Stephen Arrington, Nicole Francisco, Cicely Gosier, She' Hall, Angela Byrd-Wright and Justin Wright serve in various ministries at Calvary Community Church. Glen Guyton relocated to Texas and now attends San Antonio Mennonite Church; he is the Mennonite Church USA Director for Constituent Resources.

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