

## Paraguay 2009 - Report from Gil

I thank the Lord for the 2009 mission trip to Paraguay. It was a blessing to work with our PBC missionary there, Tim Revett and also with our IMB missionaries Bill & Terri Baer.

We left Amarillo on July 29 (Wednesday). We were to get into Asuncion on Thursday morning but had a 12 hour layover in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We were not happy about the delay, but God had a plan. As it turned out we were able to lead 4 people to the Lord and spend some discipleship time with two of them. Listen to this – they were from all walks of life – a custodian and a guard at the airport, then a taxi driver who took us into the city, and then a professional basketball player – Omar Waller from Chicago who was heading for Paraguay to play for their professional team. And, get this, Turner gave Omar his own Bible – one that had special messages and notes to athletes!

We began our work in Asuncion on July 31, with practice for our school assemblies in the church building below Tim's house (Tim lives in an upstairs apartment). Tim had some empanadas brought in, which were about as good as any meal we had there. We then traveled to a school where we presented two assembly programs. The missionary team consisted of Mary and me along with our daughter, Krissie. We also had Fredy Pavez as a translator, Ernie and Sherry McNabb, (Ernie is one of our deacons), Turner Schwarz (Burluson) and five Paramount youth, Drey Clark, Lainy Robinson, Breanna Gabel, Matt King and Kristen Coffman. By the way, each of these individuals was a blessing for me to work with! The youth did stomp routines, some music and drama along with a movement piece called "LifeHouse Everything". The children and youth in the schools responded well to our youth and to Ernie who did the Magic Coloring Book. I shared the gospel with Fredy translating and many prayed to receive Christ. When it was over, the kids from the school all wanted autographs from our youth. You would think we were transporting movie stars! Late that afternoon we went to the home of the school superintendent (Oscar) and had cosida (Paraguay hot tea) and "soupa" (pronounced "sopa" – Paraguayan "soup" that's really cornbread and cheese). Afterwards we spoke at the night school which was by Oscar's house where his wife was superintendent. Krissie shared her testimony about almost permanently losing her voice (cyst on the vocal chords) and God's comfort and healing. The 15 or so ladies in there were really touched, especially after she sang. They were also touched deeply by the testimony given by Ernie and Sherry who were celebrating their 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary.

On Saturday and Sunday we ministered in a Baptist Church in Loma Pyta with Pastor Lucio, his wife Thomasina (Tommy) and their daughters Laura (Tweety), Roxanne and Monica. Pastor Amarilla came that first morning. He is the head of the Baptist Convention in Paraguay. Our morning activity was VBS. They called it "happy hour", though it lasted several hours. Ernie took photos with his digital camera and made

copies for each child, youth and adult. Mary and Sherry with the help of our translator Tamara helped the children decorate frames to put the pictures in. The church fed us lunch - milenesa and rice. Milenesa is a thin steak that is "chicken fried" and very tasty. After lunch was the soccer and volley ball tournament. Teams signed up and played, knowing that the trophies would be awarded in the rally we would have around 4 o'clock. What we didn't anticipate was that the losing teams would not attend! When we did have the rally our youth did what they did in the schools and a gospel presentation was offered. Many were saved. All those saved were given New Testaments. One other thing - - during the afternoon tournament, we were able to talk to some of the spectators about Christ. A few were saved. In fact, a good number were saved during a halftime when Drey did illusions, gave his testimony and offered an invitation. We also did some counseling with believers. Of special note was the time Sherry spent with a troubled Christian lady by the name of Ramona. When their conversation was over, Ramona's countenance had changed completely. She again had the joy of the Lord!

The next day began with a Sunday morning service. The church only had around 10 who attended, but many children and youth (from the day before) also attended which filled the sanctuary - - maybe 80 people. Drey, Turner and Krissie led Amazing Grace, My Jesus I Love Thee and How Great Thou Art. We handed out power bracelets. I spoke. Around twenty were saved. The church again fed us lunch. Sylvio (the main layman) cooked pork and beef. It was good. After lunch Kristen and Lainy did face painting. The kids loved it! We had another tournament (soccer [they call it partido in Paraguay] and volleyball). This time we told them we were raffling off t-shirts and giving other gifts. Four teams came and about 20 received Christ. One other thing - our youth gave testimonies before the games started and sometimes at halftime. Krissie, Breanna and a translator went to a nearby plaza and ten people accepted Christ! Ernie led an Avon lady to Christ across the street from the church. Matt, standing next to the volleyball court, led a group of guys to the Lord. Lainy (with Fredy translating) led a pregnant lady to Jesus. I was proud of them and grateful that Jesus saves!

Monday and Tuesday were days filled with school assemblies. Youth did their presentations. Kristen and Turner often performed the "When I Was a Little Girl" skit, which is very moving. We always read God Loves You No Matter What. Sometimes Mary read it with Fredy translating. At other times Breanna read it in Spanish then introduced the author after which Mary gave her testimony. Three of these assemblies were at the school where Tim teaches --Nuevo Horizante. We also went to a small school where our presentation was in the courtyard I called the Garden of Eden. It had bananas and oranges growing - in the winter!

Wednesday and Thursday were off days for us which was good since we had worked 12-15 hours for five days straight. We went to Brazil to Iguacu Falls - - six hour drive. Saw Itapúa Dam which is the highest electricity producing dam in the world serving all of Paraguay and most of Brazil. That night the youth went swimming - - very cold! On Thursday morning we went to Iguacu Falls (Guarani for Big Water) - - 275 falls - - most in the world at one place and second longest - - like three miles worth (approx). On Friday we were back in the schools - - hundreds and hundreds were saved in one day! Friday night our youth fellowshiped with the Renacimiento Baptist Church where Pedro is pastor. His children are Sergio, Jessica and Veronica. We did an evangelistic outreach in the plaza the next morning. We played frisbee and soccer with the children and again did face painting. Their youth did a drama as did ours. We also did music and shared the gospel (Ernie "preached" as often as I did. He was great!) Around 20 children prayed to receive Christ! They fed us a great lunch and the fellowship with that family was very special.

On Saturday night we had a youth rally with the Hebron Church. The weather was bad so we didn't get to go out and invite people. The church family provided a snack supper serving "beshue", which is corn meal type tortilla with queso. It was really tasty and unlike anything I had ever had before. Afterwards, we still had the rally - our youth joined their praise team for music plus we did our dramas as well and a message to the youth was given by Fredy. Fredy was always available and always did a great job. I do not know what we would have done without Fredy!

The next day, Sunday morning we taught Sunday School - - Ernie and Sherry with the adults, our youth with the youth except for Breanna who taught preschool with Mary and me. Mary taught the five loaves and fishes and served tuna fish and bread. The kids loved it! I played the guitar and led them in a few songs. For the worship service they had to bring in chairs to seat the 150-175 people present. A few of our youth helped with the music, Mary read the God Loves You No Matter What book and I preached. Three adults accepted Christ and 10 or 12 others came forward for prayer. Afterwards they fed us lunch where we had pasta, beef and mandioca (which is the root from a yucca-like plant that tastes a little like a potato). The food was good, the people were fun to be with, but it was very, very cold! That afternoon we had time to see the city of Asuncion and have a last supper with Tim and the other missionaries, along with Margarita (Tim's girlfriend), Tamara (one of our faithful translators) and Laura (Tweety) who had helped us the last 6 days with the LifeHouse Everything skit.

All in all 963 people prayed to receive Christ, and that does not count the younger children we ministered to. We also know that 1000's heard the gospel through our school presentations and that many believers were encouraged. One special person to

us was our driver for the week, Mircon. Mircon took us most everywhere we went every day. Years ago he was saved and later called to ministry. Being with our team and seeing everyone ministering together – well, let's just say that God got ahold of his heart and "re-called" Mircon to the ministry. Just before we left, we gave him a number of gifts. We also took up an offering, plus gave him a huge tip – enough to send him to seminary for a semester!

So much more could be said that I have left out. I am sure the other participants have some additional stories that impacted their lives that they would be happy to share with you. I encourage you to ask them to speak to your class or to your small group!

I want to thank the Paramount family and all the people who helped us go and who prayed for us. Some may wonder why we spent most of our time ministering to youth and children. Here's why – 30% of Paraguay is age 11 or younger! 70% are age 35 and younger. The young people and really most of the people with whom we spoke and to whom we ministered were receptive and open. God is at work in Paraguay. We have been invited to return as early as 2011. I pray we will!