

Rio Grande

ISSUE 53 SUMMER 2023

MAGAZINE

FROM CANADA
TO LATIN AMERICA

THE INFANTES FAMILY,
ENJOYING LAKE LOUISE
IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK,
ALBERTA, CANADA





4



6



10



8

SUMMER 2023

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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS PUBLICATION:

Rio Grande Bible Ministries or Rio Grande = organizational name
Seminario Bíblico Río Grande or SBRG = Bible College
MLS = Missionary Language School (1955-2017)
ICS = InterCultural Studies (2017-)
Year = Graduated or last attended

on the cover Rio Grande and Canadians have had a close relationship for decades. A list of our students and staff members would not be complete without a number of Canadian names. One of those, Gordon Johnson (president, 1981-95), was instrumental in forming RGBI-Canada, with headquarters in Winnipeg. We are thankful for this partnership and dedicate this issue of our magazine to all our Canadian friends.

GO ONLINE

Check out www.riogrande.edu to see our other publications.

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PURPOSE To make God's people aware of the needs of the Hispanic World and the role that Rio Grande Bible Institute serves to provide godly Christian leadership.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

NOISY TREATS

We lived outside! We were eating supper at dusk one evening at our dining table in the jungle clearing. Suddenly we heard a series of rhythmic ticks, followed by a high-pitched whining or buzzing sound

"WHERE HE LEADS ME I WILL FOLLOW...WHAT HE FEEDS ME I WILL SWALLOW."

like someone tuning a short-wave radio, but loud enough to hear from a mile away. We soon discovered that the noise was the musical performance of the giant jungle cicadas. They are insects about two-and-a-half inches long with a florescent

green body and translucent wings.

When I was nine years old, we homesteaded in the jungle. It was a continuous adventure as we discovered the flora and fauna of our new environment, and all the excitement of new living and ministry experiences. One of the surprising discoveries was that the cicadas, or as we called them, coyuyos, were delicious!

Boys would cut a long bamboo stick, then slash the bark of a "sap" tree with a machete so that the sap would run out. They would coat the end of the bamboo stick with sap to make it sticky, so when they touched the wings of a cicada, it would stick to the bamboo. Then they would pull the bug off and put it in their pockets. Once they had enough to make a meal, they

would pull off the legs and wings and fry the rest! Many of my fellow Missionary Kids begin to salivate when they hear a cicada because they remember this delicious treat.

Experience has programmed us to respond to the enticing appearance of some foods. A picture of chocolate cake with chocolate shavings on top attracts some people. For others, hot foods with melting cheese dripping off the edges appeals to their palate. If you have never had chocolate or dripping cheese, a cuyuyo may do it for you! There is an old adage that the proof is in the pudding! At the end of the day, the tasting of the food, the effectiveness of the technology, or the lasting results of a ministry prove the value.

We recently completed an academic self-study to evaluate how well we are accomplishing our objective of making Christ-centered leaders with a biblical worldview for the global church. We did a recent alumni survey and discovered that 98 percent of our recent alumni are in ministry! Then we began to reminisce about people who have been associated with us over the past 75 years, and we wondered, "Where are they now?" Come with me through the pages of this issue, and let's see where some of them are!



Lawrence R. Windle

GOD'S OPEN DOOR

Ernie Koop, MLS 1984

**FRESH OUT OF SEMINARY, I WAS INVOLVED
IN A CHURCH PLANT IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO.**

It became quite clear to me that two options—a fork in the road if you will—lay before me. I could go to Grace Theological Seminary to study for an M.Th. in Counselling under Dr. Larry Crabb, or to Rio Grande to study Spanish, and then to Nicaragua to help with a TEE (theological education by extension) program.

Generally I prefer to make decisions based on logic, on clear pros and cons. This time I was in a quandary. I didn't trust the voices in my head! So, I decided to "throw out the proverbial fleece." I told the Lord that I was having a hard time deciding, a hard time discerning which was His voice and which one was my own. And I told Him that I would "jump through all the hoops" required by both options, and then walk through the first door that opened. He would have to open and close doors, as a way of guiding me!

Rio Grande sent me their acceptance first, so south I went—single, young, never having travelled out of Canada—off to southern Texas! I wondered about that decision as I began to search for programs in English on the radio and saw houses with bars on the windows! But God is good, and faithful. My roommate in the men's dorm was from Ecuador. He didn't know much English, and I didn't know much Spanish, but I learned quickly—mostly because I was immersed in it all day.

After graduating in December 1984, I went to Nicaragua, a context completely foreign to me, especially because of the post-revolution war that was ongoing between Sandinistas and Contras. After five years on the field as a single, I was married and returned with my wife Diane for two more years. It was



during those two years that our oldest son, Michael, was born, and I took steady steps to hand over the reins to national leadership. We left thirty-two years ago, and I am happy to say that the conference of churches (FIEMN) has more than tripled in size since then.

After a few years back in Manitoba, Diane and I, and our two boys, returned to the mission field—this time to Chihuahua, Mexico. It was a wonderful five years for us, and we really enjoyed our work with the churches. However, my allergies became such a problem that we eventually had to leave. We returned to Canada, where I served as a missions professor and dean of student development at Steinbach Bible College for the next thirteen years. Sometimes it's hard not to get restless, and one can even get tired of hearing himself tell the same stories over and over again! It was time to get back into missions in Latin America—my first love.

This time, leaving was really difficult because we left both of our boys behind! That's hard! But off we went to join a church planting team in Guadalajara, Mexico. We worked to develop multiple Bible study groups, with most of our students coming from our contacts at the fitness gym we were attending. After five years, in 2018, it became necessary to return to Canada once again. I have spent the last five years as lead pastor in a church in Steinbach, Manitoba. Thanks to today's technology, we are able to maintain contact with our many friends, churches, and others in all of the different places we have been blessed to serve. God is good, and, especially in hindsight, it is easy to trace His hand!

1984

MISSIONARY
LANGUAGE
SCHOOL
GRADUATE

1985

MISSIONS,
NICARAGUA

**ERNIE
KOOP**

CLASS OF 1984



1992

BACK TO
CANADA

1995

MISSIONS,
CHIHUAHUA,
MEXICO

2000

FACULTY,
STEINBACH
BIBLE COLLEGE,
MANITOBA,
CANADA

2013

MISSIONS,
GUADALAJARA,
MEXICO

2018

PASTOR,
MB,
CANADA

the canada connection returns to mexico

Angel Infantes, Seminario Bíblico Rio Grande 2004



▲
Angel and Blanca have been serving the Lord together since 2004

Blanca, from the Evangelical Free Church in Mexico, and I, from the Plenitud de Vida (Abundant Life) Church in Peru, met and married at Rio Grande. In our last year as students there, we visited Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) to learn about their master's program. We were excited about that possibility but, because of our financial limitations, it wasn't possible. Even so, we said, "Don't we serve a great God?"

In 2005 we were called to pastor a group of Latinos who were part of Braeside Evangelical Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. When we arrived at the church, we observed how encouraged the believers were. We believed that God would use us to bring Hispanics and English speakers closer together. Although this took a lot of work, the pastors of both the Spanish and English congregations shared the vision of the Apostle John in Revelation 7:9: "... a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

In the beginning, the pastors of both congregations visited the service in the other language; the worship teams participated in both languages; and then the pastors exchanged pulpits. With Sunday morning as the main service, there was one Spanish service a month and also small groups in Spanish.

One Sunday, when it was announced that the sermon topic was which language would be spoken at the church, it generated a lot of expectations. But that morning we affirmed that the language to

be spoken in the congregation would be the "language of love."

Our four children were born during our time in Canada: Sarai (2007), Belen (2009), Chris (2011) and Carlos (2012). In addition to studying accounting, Blanca served on the board of RGBI-Canada. With the participation of RGBI-Canada, a Bible Training School (EdenB) for Spanish-speaking believers, began in Winnipeg and later extended to the city of Brandon.

Being aware that the Hispanic community in Canada is small compared to that of the US, with God's guidance we began looking for Hispanics in the streets, markets, squares, and town fairs. When we found them, we started the conversation and asked what country they were from. Then we talked about their customs, sayings, and food and invited them to our home, always with the intention of sharing the Gospel message.

We supported the formation of another church, in the same style as Braeside, in the city of Steinbach. Together the Hispanic congregations

▼
The Infantes family includes their four Canada-born children





◀
 Enjoying
 their current
 ministry
 in Mexico,
 Blanca's
 homeland

ANGEL INFANTES

CLASS OF 2004

2004

SEMINARIO
 BÍBLICO
 RIO GRANDE
 GRADUATE

2005

PASTOR/
 CHURCH
 PLANTER,
 WINNIPEG,
 CANADA

2018

MISSIONS IN
 GUADALAJARA,
 MEXICO

It is these moments, when we see people from different countries united and worshipping God, we get a small glimpse of what it will be like in heaven.

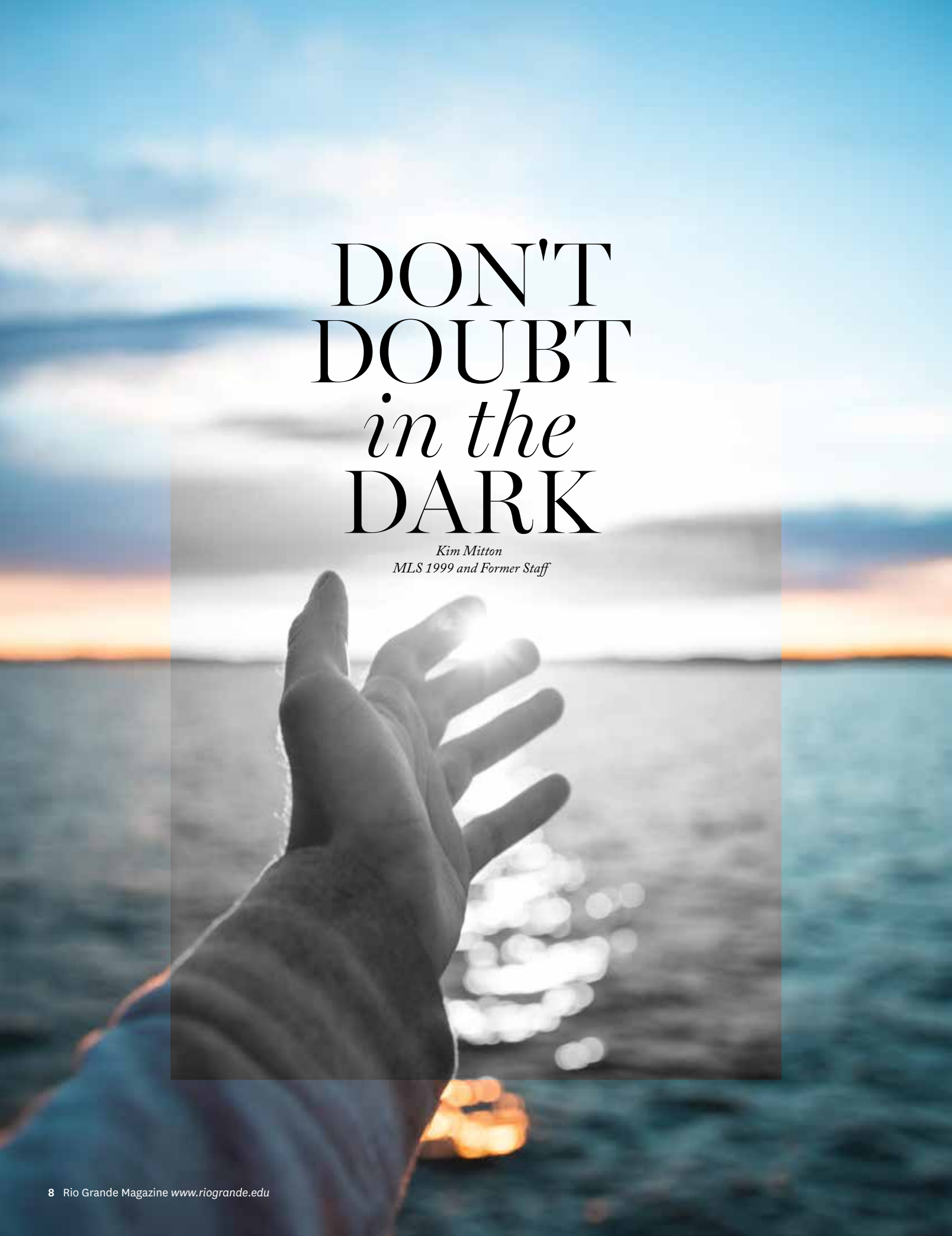
encouraged the emergence of other groups in other towns. Once a year those from four churches in the city of Portage La Prairie would get together to worship. It is these moments, when we see people from different countries united and worshipping God, we get a small glimpse of what it will be like in heaven. Serving God gives us the satisfaction of seeing people decide to follow Jesus, and doing it as a family brings us even greater joy.

By 2015, I began my master's studies at CMU (Canadian Mennonite University) while collaborating with the Aberdeen church in the formation of a Spanish congregation there. Even though Blanca was working full-time, she actively participated in founding this group. During this time we participated in family spiritual retreats, seeking God's will at this stage in which our children were growing up. As a result, Ken Zacharias, a graduate of Rio Grande's

language school and Director of Missions for the Evangelical Mennonite churches in Canada, invited us to be part of their missionary team. And we were sent to Guadalajara, Mexico in 2018.

We have already been in this city for five years and have seen people deciding for Jesus. We meet individually with people or with small groups for Bible study, and on Sundays with the home church. We also receive visits from believers from Canada who come to support this work.

As we look back, we see how God has led us to places where He wanted us to serve, allowed us to bring people closer to Him, to see the miracle of the new birth, and to have the joy of serving Him as a family. And, after many years, He has allowed me to begin my Doctorate in Ministry studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. Yes, we are still serving a great God!

A hand is shown in the foreground, reaching out towards a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and reflecting on the water's surface. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. The hand is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, with fingers slightly spread. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

DON'T DOUBT *in the* DARK

Kim Mitton
MLS 1999 and Former Staff

**KIM
MITTON**

CLASS OF 1999

▼
1990

SHORT-TERM
MISSIONS,
BOLIVIA

▼
1999

MISSIONARY
LANGUAGE
SCHOOL
GRAD

▼
1999

RIO GRANDE
BIBLE
INSTITUTE
STAFF

▼
2005

WORD
OF LIFE,
CANADA

▼
2010

STUDENT
SERVICES
COORDINATOR,
MOUNT
ALLISON
UNIVERSITY,
NEW
BRUNSWICK,
CANADA

I was raised in New Brunswick, in a Christian home with godly parents. At age nine I accepted the Lord. As a teen I was active in my local church, teaching Sunday school, Pioneer Girls, leading our youth groups, singing in the choir, and playing piano at our sister church.

When I was twenty, my intent was to go to Bible school for one year. This was my first time away from home and I was homesick! I left New Brunswick Bible Institute after just three days and got a speeding ticket on my way home!

My home church was extremely missionary oriented. When Glennie and Marilyn Wry, home on furlough, shared their ministry at Hebron Theological Seminary in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, I came to know and appreciate them. They must

However, the very morning I was to leave, my mom suffered a heart attack. When I told her my official papers had arrived she said, "You go. This is what God wants you to do." I cried all the way to the border.

When my parents came to visit, I became homesick again. A former pastor wrote me that he had sensed some discouragement in one of my letters. I talked to a coworker about it one day and she said, "Don't doubt in the dark what God has clearly told you in the light." That morning, at three a.m., I re-read Pastor Taylor's letter, which included, "Don't doubt in the dark what God has clearly shown you in the light." You could have knocked me off the bed with a feather!

DON'T DOUBT IN THE DARK WHAT GOD HAS CLEARLY SHOWN YOU IN THE LIGHT.

have seen some potential in me because they asked if I would be willing to work in the seminary office, to fill in for missionaries who were going on furlough. I agreed, went through the GMU (now Avant) missionary orientation, raised support, and soon was off to Bolivia.

I gained a whole new appreciation for missionaries and the sacrifices they make serving the Lord. Despite my limited knowledge of Spanish, I managed to communicate with the students and staff and had a great time getting to know them. I returned home thanking God that He was able to use me.

However, returning to my job at Mount Allison University, I could not get "settled" into the routine. God was preparing me for something. A girl in my youth group became a nurse and got a job in McAllen, Texas. She was homesick so I went to visit her. She had made friends with some of the staff at Rio Grande who were also friends of mine from Bolivia, so that made the trip south more exciting. While touring the Rio Grande campus, I was asked if I would be interested in coming to work for the president. I accepted the call, returned home, raised my support, and then headed back to Texas.

That was my confirmation that I was where God wanted me to be and that I should continue to shine where I was. I attended the language school and quickly got to know the students, staff, and winter volunteers on campus. Had it not been for issues with my immigration status, I believe I would still be there today.

Arriving back in Canada in 2005, I was offered a position working with students at Word of Life at their Ontario campus. With my apartment right above the girls' dorm, I had visitors in and out non-stop. What an enjoyable ministry I had with those students!

In 2010, my mom's health was deteriorating, so I faced another difficult decision. My heart was telling me to move home to help her. But I needed a job, a good health plan, and a place to serve in my home church. God provided for all those needs, and I'm back at Mount Allison University again in the Registrar's Office. I'm also serving at our sister church in Wood Point—teaching the Teen Sunday School and Olympian group, directing the choir, and playing the piano. God is still giving me opportunities to witness to those I come in contact with. What a privilege it is to serve Him. Thank You, Lord!

NO SHORT-CUTS TO MINISTRY

Mike Reimer, MLS 1995

“THEY WANT US TO DO A WHOLE YEAR OF LANGUAGE SCHOOL AT RIO GRANDE IN TEXAS!”

I was disappointed with this decision from our mission's field leadership. Didn't they know that I could pick up the language more quickly if we went directly to the field?

I chuckle now at how naive and impatient I was in my twenties. Our calling to work with the Guarani in Bolivia was strong and we wanted to get to work as soon as possible. Moving down to the Rio Grande Valley for a whole year seemed unnecessary, since I had married a Bolivian MK (missionary kid) who was fluent in Spanish and could teach me at home. I even started a Spanish correspondence course, believing that if we must go to language school, at least I could skip the first couple modules and shorten our time there.

It wasn't long before we packed our one-year-old son into our oil-burning-gas-guzzling E350 Ford van and drove south to Edinburg. Not long after we arrived, I found myself in Manny Gutierrez's office trying to test out of the first module. As the director of the language school, he asked me a few

questions in Spanish, half of which I misunderstood, and I gave him the right answer to the wrong question. He gently helped me realize that starting from the beginning would not be “time wasted.” During the last twenty-nine years of ministry, I have repeatedly appreciated Manny's words and the time we invested at language school.

Our second son was born a month after leaving Rio Grande, which gave us just enough time to process his passport, pack, and leave for our first term in Bolivia in September of 1995. Having learned the benefit of good language skills, we didn't chafe at the idea of spending another year in Santa Cruz to focus on additional language requirements before finally moving to Camiri, in the heart of a large Guarani area.

Many of the Guarani spoke Spanish, but they were much more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. We enjoyed almost instant acceptance into these subsistence farming communities because of the lifelong ministries of both Carolyn's parents and grandparents. They had learned the Guarani language well and this was going to be our next challenge, all without the luxury of an organized language school.

For thirteen years we served the Guarani with theological and leadership training courses, film ministry, and the creation of a library and radio station. In the later years, we built a two-room adobe outpost in one of the villages, so

we could live there as a family and focus our attention on raising up a strong church that could reach the communities in its area with the gospel and plant more churches.

Ten years passed and we hadn't been back to visit this village. That is, until recently, when we had the privilege of returning to Bolivia and hearing how God is working in the absence of any North American missionaries. They had pots of food all ready for us as we drove up. They served us rice, beans, and fresh corn on the cob as they related how the church has grown and how they lack room in the old mud-walled church.

After lunch they showed us our old house, which they have kept for Sunday school classes and lodging for guest speakers. On the wall still hangs our prayer card, which they enlarged and framed. We had worried that they would be resentful when we left them to lead a church plant team to Uruguay. This picture shows how proud they were to send us with their blessing and prayers to Uruguay, a country in desperate need of the gospel. They would never be able to go there, but they could release us to go.

In 2014, after four years in Uruguay, we found ourselves in missionary supporting roles. I direct Avant Ministries Canada and Carolyn serves part-time in our Winnipeg office. We now help care for our aging parents and cheer on our five adult children in their lives and ministries.

The Guarani church leaders led us into our old adobe house and made sure we noticed their "missionary wall" with our Uruguay prayer card.



The Reimers were used of God to take the Gospel to many in Uruguay, including many young people who had never heard of Jesus.



As we ate the delicious meal our Guarani friends served, we heard their plans to reach neighboring villages and start new churches.

MIKE REIMER
CLASS OF 1995

HE GENTLY HELPED ME REALIZE THAT STARTING FROM THE BEGINNING WOULD NOT BE "TIME WASTED."

1995

MISSIONARY LANGUAGE SCHOOL GRADUATE

1996

MINISTRY WITH GUARANI

1998

GUARANI LANGUAGE SCHOOL, SANTA CRUZ, BOLIVIA

2010

CHURCH PLANTING, URUGUAY

2014

DIRECTOR AVANT, MINISTRIES, CANADA

DECEMBER 1, 2022 - MARCH 31, 2023

HONOR & MEMORIAL GIFTS

IN HONOR OF

STEVE GRAYSON

52nd Wedding Anniversary
Cathie Grayson

MIKE & SHIRLEY HARRISON

Loy Arbaugh & Katherine Roberts

KEITH HEPPNER

Gail P. Higgs

DR. GORDON JOHNSON

Loy Arbaugh and Katherine Roberts

DR. GORDON JOHNSON

IN HONOR OF
HIS 95TH BIRTHDAY
Vyrne & Alma Ruth Shofner

AMALIA BENNETT AND SAMUEL

Longoria
Joyce DeLong

CHUCK LEWIS & PENNY SEBRING

Don & Barb Lewis

MICKY & SARA TAYLOR

Ron & Susan Bak

IN MEMORY OF

LAVONNE ANDERSON

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig

MILDRED BARGER

Mr. & Mrs. Mike Harrison

LORETTA KAYE BEAU LAC

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig
Laurel Montgomery Torres
Mr. & Mrs. James Van Mark

T.N. "BUD" & LUCILLE BLACKWELL

Mr. & Mrs. Ken Tharp

ORZO BROWN

Rev. Hilmore & Marie Williams

EDUARDO CALLEJA

Mr. & Mrs. Kendal Pliner

JOHN CHIPCHASE

Rev. & Mrs. Elwood H. Chipchase

MARIE CHITTOCK

Phillip & Susan Wells

BRIAN DENT

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta

VIOLA FRIESE

Marilyn Rice

MARLEITA FRISBY

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta

PAUL HOFER

Judy Anderson
Scott Decker
Kevin Hofer
LuAnn Hofer (2)
Perry Hofer
Dale & Darla Langendorfer

Don & Barb Lewis

Ronald Maendl

Rick Marquart

Donald Mendel

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Owen

Armand & Norma Rouleau

Jim & Arleen Schick

Scott Thompson

Hjalmer & Janet Tschetter

Daniel Unternahrer

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Williams

BERNICE HUBERS

Marge Kregel

BERNICE INTERMILL

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta

GRACE JOHNSON

Mr. & Mrs. Keith Jeske

IONA KLINE

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Owen

LESLIE KNOEPFLE

Mr. & Mrs. Dale Lockridge

HENRY 'HANK' LANNING

Mr. & Mrs. Glen Guhde

DONALD MARSKE

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig
Mr. & Mrs. Glen Guhde
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta
Jeffrey Petersen

MARVIN MEHLHAFF

Russell Hemsey
Mr. & Mrs. James Van Mark

GALE NELSON

Rev. Hilmore & Marie Williams

FRAN NICOL

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Mills

ARLYS PEDERSON

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig

KARL & HELEN PLACE

Dr. Ronald Place

MELVIN RAY POPE

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Ranke
Rev. Hilmore & Marie Williams

T. C. RICHARDSON

Louisa Richardson

ALLEN RUSSELL

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maatta

DALE SCHROPP

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Owen

Marian Stout

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Williams

ROSIE SVEHLA

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Ranke

JOANN SWANSON

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Ranke

ANNABELLE UNTERNAHRER

Mr. & Mrs. Kendal Pliner

ARNE J. & AGNES VIKEN

Mr. & Mrs. Ken Tharp (2)

DELORES WHITE

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Axvig
Donald & Shirley John
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Ranke

BOB WHITMAN

Rev. Hilmore & Marie Whitman

GEORGIA WILLIAMS

Rev. Hilmore & Marie Williams

AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING, "WRITE, 'BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD... SO THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABORS, FOR THEIR DEEDS FOLLOW WITH THEM.'"

REVELATION 14:13

RIO GRANDE BIBLE MINISTRIES
CAMPUS NEWS



NEW APARTMENTS

We are almost to the finish line on our two new apartment buildings. We are trusting that students will be able to begin using these new apartments in the fall. Please pray with us for the families who will be living here and preparing for service in God's kingdom.

MEDICAL MISSIONS TRIP During the Easter break, some of our students participated in a medical missions ministry in Reynosa, Mexico, providing medical care for immigrants waiting for approval to cross the border into Texas. Wounds were bandaged, vaccinations were provided, and the sick were cared for by our students, several of whom are licensed doctors and nurses. Most importantly, they shared the Gospel with the immigrants and prayed for them. Some even shared the Gospel in Chinese through an app on their phone.

ABHE VISIT The visit of the ABHE, the Association for Biblical Higher Education, has come and gone, and we are again officially approved as a place where students can prepare themselves for the work that God has for them. For more than 70 years, Rio Grande Bible Ministries has been glorifying God by serving the Spanish-speaking church through equipping leaders, edifying believers, and evangelizing the lost. We are excited to be a part of this ministry.



▲
“God planted me here at Rio Grande and He gave me one message, the message of the Cross. I am determined to bear much fruit where I was planted, and to declare that one message ‘till I die!”

My dear friend remained doggedly faithful to his calling and to the message, and the impact of his legacy has blessed generations of alumni of the Seminario Bíblico Río Grande and thousands of those who have listened to the faithful proclamation of the sufficiency of Christ.

Dr. Gordon E. Johnson and his wife, Grace, arrived from Winnipeg, Manitoba, for missionary service at the Rio Grande Bible Institute in 1954. He served as Professor, Academic Dean (1968-1981) President (1981-1995), and finally as President Emeritus, though he often joked that the title “Emeritus” sounded more like a skin disease than an honorific title.

Our beloved servant and faithful friend passed into the presence of the Lord April 17, 2023.

—Dr. Lawrence Windle,
President

JUST LIKE *family*

Jean Barsness

It wasn't on my bucket list. Actually, I didn't even have a bucket list. But if I had had one, I am sure that "to teach at Rio Grande" would have been on it.

Sixty-seven years ago, I arrived in Panama as a single missionary for a five-year term with GMU (now AVANT Ministries). I was twenty-one years old. Instructions were to bypass Language School and to go



directly to Panama. So, that I did! It took several years before they disclosed "why?"

That was 1955. Aaron and Imageyne Juett also had just arrived in Panama. They and my co-worker and I were assigned church planting ministries in villages within a short distance from each other.

Each Tuesday night, we met for prayer meeting at the Juett home and soon we became much more than co-workers—we became "family." Then it was furlough time. Aaron, Imageyne, and family returned to the States and I returned to Canada.

During that year of furlough, unanticipated situations happened and our lives were forever changed.

◀ Little did she know what the future held for her when she went to Panama in 1956.

Aaron and Imageyne Juett did not return. Aaron had accepted an invitation to teach at the Rio Grande Bible Institute. And I met Gil Reimer. Gil was a high school teacher who was making application to serve in Latin America. Following a year back on the field, we were married and were asked to help plant a church in the interior educational city of Santiago.

Aaron's enthusiasm and loyalty to Rio Grande soon became contagious and impacted our newly planted and growing Panamanian churches. Congregations were blessed with Christ followers who had surrendered their lives to God for ministry. And one by one, Vladimir Vega, Henry Ureña, Benjamin González, and Virgilio DeLeón enrolled at Rio Grande.

Following graduation, Vladimir, Henry, Benjamin, and Virgilio returned to Panama, now prepared and equipped to pastor the churches that missionaries had helped plant. Today, decades later, they continue to give servant leadership to our AVANT churches. Henry still pastors the church in Santiago, and they and their congregation continue to faithfully pray for me and my family. Truly amazing!

Just as Aaron and Imageyne had attended the Language School at Rio Grande, so did Eugene and Wynette Kliever. Prior to their final year in Language School, the Klievers visited Panama—their future ministry location.

Just a few short months before their arrival, my husband Gil was kidnapped, and eight days later, his body was found on the banks of the Panama Canal. He had been stabbed to death. Because of the impact of the Gospel, he and two others were targeted, but Gil was the only one to lose his life.

It seemed that it was no longer safe for my two children and me to remain in Panama. Within a month, we transferred to Ecuador. Prior travel arrangements had been made to take a three-month leave at the


conclusion of the school year, so we flew to Canada via Panama. We and the Kliewers arrived in Panama in the same month for our brief visits.

As we had just met, I had no idea if Eugene and Wynette's goal was to find a house, and no idea if to look for needed furniture was even on their "to do list." But, how interesting it is that our house soon became their house. Our red sofa soon became their red sofa. And our dining room furniture became their furniture. And their kitchen forever looked like my kitchen. Once again, Rio Grande language student graduates became friends, and soon to be forever family.

Rio Grande's vision has been to faithfully equip Christ followers to know and to teach the WORD and also to prepare missionary appointees in the Spanish language.

Following almost twenty years in Panama, I was invited to teach at Briercrest College in Saskatchewan. Years later I was also invited to teach at Rio Grande ... Wonderful! However, and in God's timing, our current family issues had priority.

Rio Grande has indeed impacted my life. Words like "enriched, blessed, encouraged, inspired" all describe the imprint that RGBI faculty and graduates have had on my life. It is true. I have not been a Rio Grande student or prof ... so why do I feel like family?



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PLEASE CONSIDER HOW GOD MAY USE YOUR GIFT TO BE A PART OF THIS MINISTRY.

