



CROSS
COLLABORATION
MTW MISSIONARIES TO PERU

NOVEMBER 2018

MISSIONS NEWSLETTER

**PLANTING CHURCHES
IN AREQUIPA, PERU**

**WILL YOU PARTNER
WITH US?**

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MEMO:
BONHAM FAMILY - 10788
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**READ THIS LETTER
AND PRAY!**



“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Eccl. 3:1-4

Who doesn't love to read about the birth and the growth of a new hope-filled ministry? Videos and photos of people laughing and dancing can be incredibly contagious. Successful stories bring hope and demonstrate the positive and uplifting ways that God is working on the mission field.

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes embraces these joyful moments, but at the same time reminds us that there are some seasons that are harder than others and less pleasant to read about. Seasons of uprooting and death, seasons to break things down, to weep and to mourn.

Brothers and sisters, we are in this latter season of sorrow. As of last Sunday, Oct. 28th, La Roca had its final service and had to close its doors. In 2015, we were asked to help this small congregation who had been meeting for almost 12 years. Soon after accepting their invitation, the Peruvian pastor resigned after years of difficult ministry. After almost four years of pouring our own hearts and souls into developing this congregation, we saw such little growth that we could not justify continuing to invest our lives and your resources there.

Though we had initial growth of an average of 55 regular attenders, we dropped back down to less than 15 as we tried to get our Peruvian brothers to assume various responsibilities. For four years, we faithfully preached the word covering the books of Genesis, Jonah, John, 1 Corinthians and Colossians. We held discipleship groups for all ages and focuses, cell groups in people's homes, weekly evangelism in the parks, evangelistic events in our homes and the church, retreats, English as a Second Language outreach, youth outreach, leadership training, soccer outreach, medical campaigns and counseling. Each direction we

turned, we hit a wall. The church would simply not grow.

As we analyzed the situation, spoke with presbytery and our mission's leadership, we realized that if our church could not be motivated to work, sacrifice and give its time and finances, it simply would not grow. We should not enable a church or cause it to think it is a healthy church just because it is being sustained by missionaries.

Jesus instructed his disciples to move on and shake the dust off of their feet if certain towns would not welcome them. He also taught that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." We believe that he has called us to let this mission work die, and that he will be glorified through this very difficult process, which, Lord-willing, will provide future growth in another congregation.

Though we have closed La Roca, we have established a plan for pastoral care for the members of our mission work, which includes helping our church members plug in with other churches in the area.

Last Sunday was a very difficult service with many tears. It was a difficult moment for our mission work, for our families and for those we've invested in so much. At the same time, we wholeheartedly believe that God called us to it. We know that the Great Shepherd of the sheep does not lead us through valleys without our good and his glory in mind, and that he does not waste his time, our time or your time with wasted efforts. We believe this promise and cling to it in times like this: "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

We also believe that God did exactly what he intended to do through your support, our work and those who were touched by the power of the gospel here in Arequipa. God has accomplished his work and though the outcome we had hoped for was not achieved, we believe that God's greater purposes surpasses our understanding.

What are our next steps?

Though the church has officially closed, our seminary (Seminario Biblico Reformado) is only continuing to grow and exceed our expectations. In fact, we will now be able to serve various pastors and churches connected to the seminary who have been asking us to help them. The Bonhams will press forward there with a focus on discipling students in church-planting efforts. The Gutierrez family will take some time off during this break in the church planting work, and begin Home Missionary Assignment to raise support for the next season of ministry.

Brothers and sisters, though humanly speaking we have not had "success" in this congregation, we know that the labor we have accomplished through your support and prayers is not in vain. We know that we come out of this experience even more prepared to do the Lord's work, and it is our request that you would pray for us to be as Paul says: "...Steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." 1 Cor. 15:58