

July 2021 Newsletter

Greetings from Peru! There is so much to share with you!

In April, our pastor announced that he would be leaving at the end of the month. That week the church prayed, and on April 21st they unanimously voted to accept Papo as the interim missionary-pastor for this year. On April 28th, Papo preached his first sermon as pastor of the Refugio church.



We know the importance of praying and seeking God's guidance. Because of this, we have asked the church to pray with us this year for God's clear guidance as to whether Papo will continue in the missionary-pastor role of the Refugio Church after this year, or if they will seek a long-term Peruvian pastor. Either way, we will continue our original five-year ministry commitment to the village of Huaycan de Cieneguilla. We will be working to bless our neighbors, present the good news of salvation through Jesus, lead people to the Lord, disciple them, discern & develop leaders and see the Refugio Church of Huaycan firmly established. We are seeking God's guidance for the next step after these five years are over. Please join us in seeking God's guidance!



As Papo has begun his role as missionary-pastor, I (Jill) have received leadership of the Women's group. I had been co-leading the Women's group with the former pastor's wife via phone conference-calls for the past year. I am now meeting with the women in person every Saturday afternoon. Please pray for this ministry!

I was surprised that when I asked a few of the women what they would like to learn in Women's group, they responded that they wanted to learn how to read the Bible, how to pray and how to live as a Christian. I've since learned that due to the frequent changing of missionaries and pastors over the years, and the lack of other Christian churches nearby, the majority of our congregation haven't had access to Bible studies or discipleship groups. Although most of them trusted Christ as their Savior years ago, they have continued their Catholic cultural tradition of seeking God in the hard times, going to church when convenient and dutifully sitting through the pastor's sermons, while never knowing how to open the Bible and personally grow in their faith and relationship with God.

Our goal is to help the individual members of the church know how to grow in their relationship with God, so that no matter what happens in the future they will be equipped to continue growing in their faith, growing together as a congregation, and reaching out to the community around them with the gospel of Jesus Christ!



The former pastor and his family were serving at the Refugio Church in a majority of the official church leadership positions. Now that they have gone, the only other leader in our congregation besides Papo and me, is our faithful treasurer, Fernando. Fernando and his wife have very demanding jobs, so that leaves Papo and me to lead most ministries in the church for now (Women's, Men's, Youth, and Music ministries, Children's Church, individual and group discipleship, Prayer meetings, church events, etc!). With our baby due soon, Papo is left with much of the work, as well as preaching the sermons. Please pray for wisdom for us! We are praying for leaders and helpers. Especially for July-October, when we will be learning to be parents, including, from what I hear, how to live on less sleep... <3

In March, the third wave of the pandemic hit Peru... hard! After a few weeks of lockdown, strict regulations were again put into place. Thankfully, the restrictions have been less intense in Huaycan, since we're a small village outside of the city. But this wave has hit us harder in other ways.

Every few days, we heard of someone who had a family member fighting for their life, or who had passed away. Many of our family, friends and neighbors were sick with Covid. Papo's parents, as well as his older brother's family, also got sick. They were miserable for a few weeks, but we praise God that they all recovered without any apparent complications.

Antonio, the neighbor who accepted Christ, whom Papo was discipling in January, became critically ill. From the hospital he sent us the message that he was so thankful to have the confident hope of his salvation through Jesus as he was facing death. Thank you for those of you who prayed with us! He has made a full recovery and is praising God for a second chance to live and grow in his new faith.

Mario, a longtime friend of Papo's family, and a member of our church, was medicine. Someone miraculously offered to pay the thousand dollars needed for the oxygen treatment, but God provided a different treatment and within a few weeks Mario had made a full recovery. We're so thankful to have him back in church with us!



Papo's uncle, another Mario, suddenly got sick the beginning of April and soon became critically ill.



Uncle Mario was a pillar in his family; one who rarely got sick. When he became sick with Covid it rocked the whole family. He was so dear to us as well and we were gripped with fear as we watched him quickly get worse, because we knew that even though he had heard the gospel many times over the years, he had never trusted Jesus as his Savior.

Papo and I visited him at a distance, prayed with him, and shared the gospel again.



A few days later we heard that his lung capacity was down to 10%, and he was fighting for every breath. We were heartbroken!

Later that night, Papo's younger brother Christopher sent a message to the family chat..., *"I shared the gospel with my uncle Mario. He understands that he is a sinner and is repentant. He prayed tonight and received Jesus as his Savior..."* When Papo and I read that message, we wept!



We knew that no matter what happened, Uncle Mario was safe in God's hands.

A few days later he passed away.

God didn't save his physical life. He did a much greater miracle; He gave him eternal life!

Papo was privileged to minister to his family and share the Gospel at Uncle Mario's funeral. Saying goodbye was painful, but we have a beautiful assurance of seeing him again one day.

A few days later our neighbor two doors down came and asked for prayer for her daughter, Maria. Maria was a faithful member of our church; the only one in her family who had trusted in Christ. She



was always the first one at the church, even before the pastor arrived on many occasions. She loved to sing and worship God. Maria was mentally handicapped; we were told that before the first missionaries came to Huaycan seven years ago, she never talked. But after she started coming to the church and got to know Jesus, she started talking and singing praises to God! Papo prayed with her mother and that Sunday he announced to the church that we would go together on Wednesday, as a church, to stand outside her house to sing worship songs to encourage Maria, and to pray for her. But on Monday we received news that Maria had been transferred to the hospital and had passed away there.

On Wednesday, instead of going to sing for Maria, we accompanied her family to the cemetery. Papo brought the guitar and sang worship songs over her grave.

That Sunday Papo shared with the church that, as Maria was always the first one to the church, God gave her the privilege of being the first of the Refugio congregation to come to Him before His throne in Heaven.

We miss our dear Maria, but we are full of joy knowing that she is no longer held captive by her mentally handicapped body. It's no longer a struggle for her to speak and sing praises to our great God. She now has a perfect body and mind, and we know that she is full of joy singing praises to her beloved Lord Jesus!



Please pray for Maria's family. Her parents got sick soon after she did and were in quarantine, so were unable to go to the burial. They are now recovered and mourning their daughter's death. Her family are not believers and are broken. Please pray that we can be a blessing to her family - our neighbors - in the coming weeks and months.



Amid the tears and heartbreak, God has also brought us overwhelming joy; many people have trusted Jesus as their Savior these past few months, including two of our youth group members, Sebastian and Bryan!

Neither of their families are believers, but when Papo was having discipleship classes with a few of the other kids, they wanted to join the class too.

So, he gave them their own class, explaining the

gospel to them. A few weeks later they separately came to Papo and asked him to pray with them to accept Jesus as their Savior! Rejoice with us – and with the angels in heaven!



A few weeks later two of the other teens, Maricielo and Lucho, who have been coming to Refugio Church since they were little, got baptized! It was the first in-person group gathering after a long quarantine, so it was extra special to be able to celebrate their baptism with the congregation.



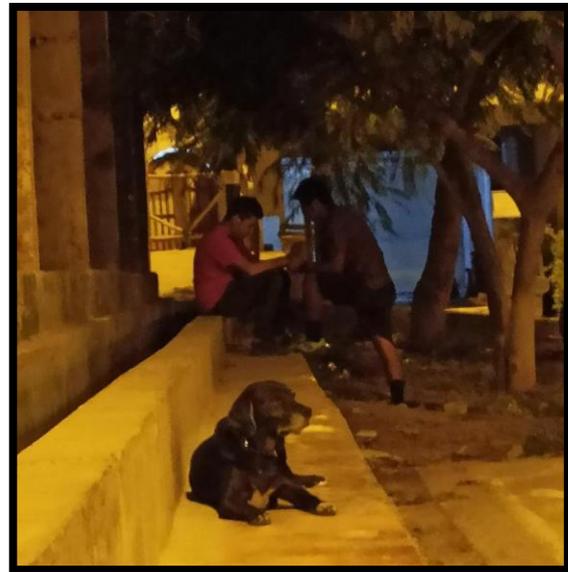
A few weeks later Papo invited another youth group to join us for an outreach. He took both groups around the neighborhood, sharing the gospel with our community. A teen, Xiomara, made a profession of trust in Christ that day! Please pray for her new relationship with Jesus.

Once the 2021-22 school year started, the teens' weren't as willing to spend precious afternoon free time in Youth Group.

Papo plays soccer with them every evening in the park, so he decided to start bringing youth group to them instead! He shares the gospel with them every chance he can get, and sometimes, as they're waiting for enough kids to get there to start a soccer game, he gives them small Bible lessons. Sometimes he tells them he'll play with them that day after he shares a Bible message with them.

One of those evenings Papo shared a message of salvation with a group of about 18 kids. After the game, one of the teens asked him to explain more deeply what he had shared before the game. Manuel had grown up an agnostic and didn't believe any of this "Jesus stuff". Most of the families in our community are either agnostic, atheist, or non-practicing Catholics. Papo had been explaining to the teens that even if you don't believe it, that doesn't mean it isn't true. He explained that someone could choose not to believe in gravity, but they would still fall if they jumped from a rooftop. What he said resonated with Manuel, and that night he trusted Jesus as his Savior!

Papo has taken every opportunity to disciple him, and Manuel has been passionate about learning.



Please pray for Manuel and Papo!

A few weeks later, we were invited to celebrate a birthday with Papo's family. They were gathering on one of the many Sunday mornings that formal church services were banned in the Covid lockdown. Papo said we would come only if they agreed to join us for our family church service. We played guitar, sang and had a worship service, then Papo preached a private family sermon, going through the gospel from Romans and John. It was a special time!

When it ended, I stepped out briefly. When I returned, I saw Papo and his younger brother Christopher praying with Dandy, their older brother. As I walked up to them, they said, Amen. Papo looked up, eyes shining, and told me that Dandy, who had always opposed Christianity and wanted nothing to do with it, had just trusted Jesus as his Lord and Savior! Papo, Christopher, my mother-in-law and I all started crying! The other family members didn't understand why we were crying, but we were overwhelmed with joy! Please pray for Dandy, as his wife has not yet trusted Christ. Pray that he will grow in his relationship with God and the ability to share the love of his Savior with Ana and baby Liam.



Some have asked about our nephew, Jack. Pandemic restrictions kept him in the jungle with his grandpa, where he has a job and is doing well. Thank you for your interest in him and your prayers!

Papo's brother Christopher is a police officer. He accepted Christ when he was 11 years old, on the same day that Papo did. He was faithful for awhile, but he has always struggled with compromising; living for Jesus when he's at church but living for the world when he is away. It got more difficult for him to live for the Lord after joining the police force. When he fell in love with Pamela, an unbeliever, a few years ago, he started to really walk away from the Lord. Papo was heartbroken and cried out in prayer for his brother every day. Last year, Papo asked Christopher if he could give him discipleship classes. After a few months, he agreed.



When our friend Mario got sick earlier this year, Papo asked Christopher to go with us to visit him. We went to where Mario was staying, prayed with him, sang worship songs, and had a small Bible study - with Mario on the bed across the room from us. When Christopher saw how encouraged Mario was and felt God's presence in that room, he said he realized that as a policeman God had given him a unique position where he could do so much for Him, but he was throwing that away. He said he wanted to live for God

now. From then on, we have seen such a change in Christopher!

Christopher is pictured here praying with some of the youth group teens.



Christopher kept meeting with Papo for the discipleship classes, but also started to read the Bible with Pamela every night. Shortly after Uncle Mario passed away, Pamela prayed with Christopher and trusted Jesus as her Lord and Savior!!!

Again... tears of joy!! Please pray for Christopher and Pamela as God continues to work in their hearts and lives.

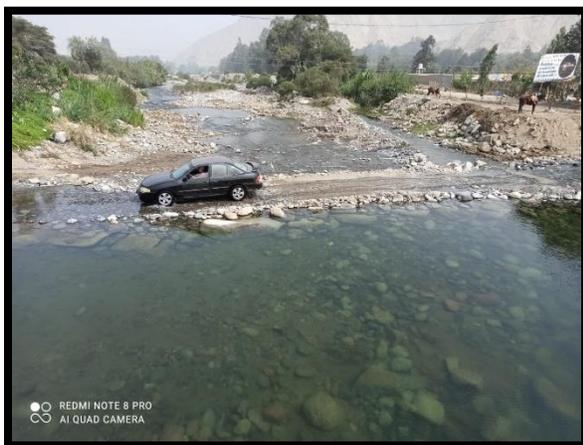
Since that time, Papo has begun discipling Mario and his friend Victor. Victor is a man who in the past never even believed in God. We now know he trusted Christ last year, when Mario asked our former pastor to talk with his friend about God.



Christopher & Pamela

A young man from Mario's family was also there when Papo arrived to teach the first discipleship class with them two weeks ago. After the class, they talked with him a bit, and he ended up praying with Papo and trusted Christ as his Savior. He is now joining them for the discipleship classes each week! 😊

In our last update letter, we asked you to pray for God to provide the funds for the land that we are purchasing. This property, and the house we hope to build there, will provide a clean and more stable housing situation; a place for meetings, events and small group ministries and a ministry base for us in a location that will make it possible for us to extend our reach to this new development across the river from our present apartment. We honestly weren't sure how God would provide the funds every month but knew that He was leading us to purchase this land. He has shown Himself faithful. Every month since November, God has provided EXACTLY what we have needed. We've been trusting God, knowing that He has promised to provide for our every need. And He has!



Thank you for your prayers and support, and praise God for His faithfulness! We know that this provision is God's answer to your prayers for us and your partnership in this work. THANK YOU!

While you're praying for provision for this land and future building, would you please include prayer for a replacement vehicle for us? Vehicles don't last long here due to the road conditions, but our little car has been an important tool as we serve here in *Huaycan de Cieneguilla*. Again, thank you!

I'm sitting here typing this with a big belly and our little soccer player has been kicking me like crazy as she listens to the clicking of the keyboard! Zarah (pronounced Sarah) Joy is due on July 28th, 2021. We are counting down the days. We are loving getting to know our active little gymnast as she grows inside of me. I'm staying busy sewing cloth diapers and getting our home ready for a baby. Zarah Joy loves her daddy already and jumps and kicks every time he talks to her or puts his hand on my belly. She loves listening to him preach at church on Sundays too! I can't wait to see him get to hold her for the first time.... Thank you for your prayers for us during this time.



This year has had its share of ups and downs, and it's only half over! Elections for the fourth president since March 2020 were held; the winner is yet undecided. The "third wave" of Covid reportedly originated in Peru. And in our area, earthquakes are numbered by the day and week! In all this uncertainty and these intense challenges, I'm so thankful for our faithful God, who is unchanging, trustworthy, strong and on the Throne. The more the Earth trembles and shakes, even literally, the more thankful I am to be standing on the one true firm foundation that cannot be shaken!

I know that what God is doing here is a result of faithful prayers. God has been providing for our every need and even some wants, and we have been able to share with those in need around us as well. "The fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much" (James 5:16). We can testify to the way that God has answered your prayers for us! We can often physically feel your prayers covering us. Thank you also for your messages and encouragement; they mean so much to us! Keep your eyes up my friends! May God bless you and keep you.



In Him, *Jill and Papo*

p.s.- Extra glimpses of our life here: The park and soccer field across the street from our home has been demolished in preparation for a government tourism center building. The district is hoping that the Inca and Pre-Inca Ruins, starting a block from our home, will bring tourism money to Huaycan de Cieneguilla. This was our main outdoor meeting place for youth group and church activities, as well as a main meeting place for the village community and family gatherings. It seems like a huge loss!

My parents brought me a hair clipper for a wedding gift. During the strict Covid lockdowns Papo was so glad for his in-house barber! His friends and family even come for haircuts. And the neighbor kids... 😊

