

## Newsletter from the Alvarados

December 30th, 2010



*Happy Birthday! Raul (Dec.21<sup>st</sup> ) & Betty (Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> )*

### Happy holidays!

Our prayers are that God's richest blessings be poured upon you and your loved ones during this beautiful season and in the New Year to come. It's a great joy for us to share with you the blessings we've received during this year by doing the Lord's mission in Panama.

Several families of our local congregation have moved to other towns in Panama during 2010. This isn't a loss for the Metropolitan Church, but instead it's an expansion of God's kingdom in Panama: **Mark and Miriam Upton** moved to the province of **Cocle** to establish a new church in **Farallón**; **David and Lisa Carter** have been traveling every Sunday from Panama City to **Anton** to develop a new congregation in **El Valle**; and **Hilario and Monica Moreno** moved to **Darién** to support the new church in **Jaqué**. Also several of our youth have moved to the U.S. to study and they are planning to return to Panama when they finish their career. Supporting the new missions and sharing with them have been a joyful experience for our Metropolitan church.



The Metropolitan Church of Christ worshipping at the *Instituto America High School* – Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> , 2010



Carlos & Melida, missionaries of our local church

### The Metropolitan Church of Christ in Panama

**City** was established in May 2009 with 45 members. We're finishing 2010 with a membership of 82. Establishing new congregations and supporting new missions has been a great achievement for our local church. Presently, we're partially supporting **Didiel and Claudia Mitre** (\$150 per month) to work with the new church in **Metetí, Darién**. We also have been sending **Carlos and Mélida Lopez** to support Didiel and Claudia's mission work in

Meteti the last Sunday of each month. Carlos and Melida have become one of the most active members at the Metropolitan church. Both of them are students at our **School of Biblical Studies**.

One of the activities we've been enjoying the most is our **Friday night fellowship** which we call "**vigilia**" (**vigil**). From 8: 00 p.m. to midnight we worship the Lord singing songs, studying the Bible, praying in groups and eating together "with glad and sincere hearts". We're having this fellowship the last Friday of every other month in the homes of our members. These vigils have developed a family relationship and great spiritual growth among the members.



Christian fellowship at Marcos & Arlette Rios's home- Nov. 21th



**Men praying together at our Friday night vigil** time (8: 00 p.m.) for at least 5 minutes. We also have our **“ladies prayer group”** who meet together once a week to pray for specific petitions of our members and for the mission work in Panama. During the “Friday night vigil” our prayers are full of thanksgivings and petitions to God. Working together with a **“prayerful church”** is a joyful experience. Many non- Christian visitors have witnessed our fraternal love, have participated in our prayer sessions and have listened to the gospel during these fellowships.

There are many prayers behind the spiritual growth of our congregation. Before our Sunday worship, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 we have prayer sessions in three groups: Our youth group, the ladies and the men pray simultaneously for a joyful Sunday worship, for the preacher and his message, for spiritual growth of the church, for the visitors and for other petitions. We also have a **“cadena de oración”** (prayer chain): all the members pray together every night at the same



**Women praying together at our Friday night vigil**



Our small group that meets in **Brisas del Golf** has been providing great comfort to **Roderick Valdés and his 3 daughters**. On October 26<sup>th</sup> Roderick and his wife Keila were going in their car to pick up their baby at Keila’s brother house. Roderick lost control of the car when one of the tires exploded. Roderick hit a post and his car was completely destroyed. Roderick survived but Keila was killed. Roderick is one of the preachers at the church **in Pedregal, Panama** and Keila was a strong Christian young lady. The girls are 17, 3, and 5 months old. Betty and I joined the small group at **Brisas del Golf** to meet with Roderick’s family. We met with them for a month to pray together and to comfort them in this moment of sorrow. Since Roderick lives a few minutes away from **Brisas del Golf**, he will be joining our small group there with his daughters once a week.



Raul sharing the Word at the Children's Hospital

children who are unable to attend the English classes. We both pray with the kids and their parents in the hospital rooms. Since these families live in different areas of the nation, sharing Christ' love with them is spreading the seed of the kingdom in our country.

I'm also offering English tutoring classes to some of the kids who stay at the hospital for a long period of time. One of them is **Marcelino Ruiz** who has been receiving special treatment for Leukemia. Marcelino (13) is the oldest of 6 brothers in his family. I was able to share the gospel with him and with his mother **Kathia**. They both attended our Sunday worship and hopefully they will keep attending our church meetings when they return to the city.



Marcelino receiving English tutoring classes

and several other Non-Christian families visited our Sunday worship and participated in our Mother's Day Program. At this fellowship our kids and youth sang songs and presented poems, and special recognitions to the mothers. The men of the congregation gave gifts to the ladies and served a special lunch to recognize their virtues and commendable labors.

Sharing Jesus' love with the kids at **The Elementary School at the Children's Hospital** is one of the most wonderful experiences I ever had in my ministry. I've been teaching English to the kids at this hospital every Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. At the end of each class I talked to them about Jesus and pray for their needs. When I finish the lesson, I join **Norberto Lasso** – who is the coordinator of the benevolence ministry at our local church – to visit the



Elementary School at the Children's Hospital

Marcelino's parents live 5 hours away from Panama City, in the mountains of the western **province of Cocle**. Marcelino travels with his mother every week, from Cocle to the city, to receive treatments for Leukemia at the Children's Hospital. Just like Marcelino, there are many kids who live far away from the city and stay at the Children's Hospital for months - even for several years- to receive special treatments.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Marcelino and his mother Katia



On December 19<sup>th</sup>, we had another fellowship right after our Sunday worship. At this activity a group of our children presented a play in which they exalted the real meaning and the



purpose of the birth of Jesus. Our youth also performed a *Pantomime* entitled **“I will believe in Him”**. It was a powerful performance which encouraged all the attendance to keep the faith in Christ in the mist of trials. After the presentations, we gave gifts to the children (10 of them were from non- Christian families) and served a special dinner for them.



One of the activities that we’re enjoying the most is our **“family fellowships”**. Presently we have 6 groups that participate in Bible



Family fellowship at the Alvarado’s home

studies in different areas

Lynn and Jim Richardson at our Bible study

of Panama City. Each group meets once a week to enjoy the Bible lessons and the Christian fellowship. Brother **Jim Richardson** and I have been conducting the Bible studies at our small group which meets in Christian homes in the communities of **Albrook and Curundu Plain**. Very often our group enjoys a “potluck” right after our Bible study. These meetings have greatly encouraged the spiritual growth and the family relationship among the members of the church. Frequently, we have non-Christian visitors who participate in our home Bible studies. On December 29<sup>th</sup>, all the groups finished the study of the book of Acts.

Our main goal for 2011 is to establish elders and deacons in our congregation. Brother Richardson – who was one of the elders at the Davis Park Church of Christ in Modesto, California - will be conducting lessons during our Sunday Bible class to teach the congregation about the functions and qualifications of elders and deacons. We already have good candidates that could function as shepherds and deacons. Some of them are **Elio Vergara**, who is a blameless minister at our congregation that has been working in the Lord’s mission in Panama for more 25 years; **Wendell Watson** who has been collaborating with us as a leader and a Bible

teacher in the church for 9 years; and **Freddy Mojica**, who is godly man with a strong Christian family and a faithful leader in our congregation. Freddy is presently the treasurer at our local church.



**Elio Vergara & family**



**Wendell Watson & family**



**Freddy Mojica & family**

On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, I had a pleasant surprise right after our Bible study in **Curundu Plain**. Betty prepared a “surprise party” to celebrate my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. I wasn’t expecting this party because Betty and I had already celebrated our birthdays: mine on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> and Betty’s on Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>. However, Betty wanted our small group to participate of what she called “**my half of century birthday**”. It was a celebration full of joy and great sense of humor.



**Raul’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration!!!**

2010 has been a year of growth for the Metropolitan Church of Christ in Panama City and a year of expansion of God’s kingdom in our nation. Christ is the only foundation to establish an organized, growing and loving church in Panama City -and in every nation- guided by the Holy Spirit through faithful elders, deacons, evangelists and teachers. We ask you to join us in prayer for us to achieve this divine purpose. We give thanks to the Lord for allowing us to share the gospel in our country and we also express our gratitude to you for supporting us in this great mission.

In Christ love,

Raul & Betty Alvarado