

Mayan Descendants Hear the Gospel from Belize City Believers

Story by Carol Savage



Photo by Mario Vasquez



Pastor Joel Meyer of Port Loyola CC gives a disabled youth a soccer ball.

Photo by Marika Herrera

For the past year, believers from Port Loyola Calvary Chapel in Belize City have been building relationships and sharing the Gospel with a nearby, unreached, indigenous people group called the Kekchi. A Central American tribe in Belize whose culture is almost untouched by modern technology, the Kekchi were presented with the timeless message of redemption in Christ through practical assistance with food and supplies, a vacation Bible school, outreaches to women and the elderly, and two showings of *The Jesus Film* translated into the Kekchi

High schoolers from Port Loyola CC in Belize City play games with indigenous Kekchi and hiked into the bush to minister to a Central American tribe called the Kekchi,

language. As a result, nearly 300 Kekchi villagers were made aware of the grace of God.

Eighteen missionaries—including Senior Pastor Joel Meyer, 14 high school students, and others—traveled six hours from Belize City into undeveloped land known as “the bush” to the village of Dolores where the Kekchi live. Port Loyola CC believers had made previous excursions—including a prior four-day mission trip and several day trips—to visit the Kekchi and establish relationships with them. Many of the Kekchi speak English or Spanish along with their native tongue, enabling believers to communicate with them. Additionally, the wife of one of the Port Loyola CC elders, Polfina Palacio, is Kekchi Mayan.

The Kekchi are descendants of the ancient Mayan people who originally inhabited the area. According to Pastor Joel, residents of Dolores “live off the land for the most part. They don’t have any electricity or running water. ... Many had never even seen a TV or watched a movie.” They belong to a religion which teaches that salvation is by works, not trust in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. During the five-day mission trip last spring, Pastor Joel explained to the Kekchi “the difference between ... religious traditions, and having a real relationship with the Lord.”

Pastor Joel described the villagers’ reaction to *The Jesus Film*, which the team showed using a generator: “[The film] is about two and a half hours long, and the villagers

children. The team traveled six hours



Photo by Michelle Rivero

Port Loyola elder Galbert Palacio, right, shares with a Kekchi man.

literally stood the entire time. It didn’t even look like anyone blinked. We showed it again two nights later, and the whole village came out again to watch it. About an hour into it, it started to rain and half the people left, but the other half stood out in the rain to finish the movie. Many seemed touched by it and by the love our team showed them.” He elaborated, “Many of the ladies had heart-to-heart conversations about the Lord and what it really means to be a Christian.”

The team also showed the love of Christ by providing school supplies and food collected from the church. They offered a women’s Bible study and a vacation Bible school to the residents of Dolores, and reached out to elderly villagers by visiting their homes.

Pastor Joel stated, “Many of the believers who went on the trip struggle to put food on the table on a daily basis. It was a huge test

of faith and an answer to prayer to see the Lord bring in the money for the trip and to be able to bless the Kekchi people.” He added, “I have noticed a huge change in the lives of the people who went. I look back to the 2007 trip, and it is amazing how different all the kids are. It seems like it was sort of a turning point in their faith.”

Because of this, Joel summarized the trip with 2 Corinthians 8:2-3, which says: “That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing.”

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Widows Helping Widows Fellowship Group

Story by Christmas M. Beeler

When Donna Nunes’ husband died of a heart attack in 1997, the young mother of three boys knew that the Lord had been preparing her heart to stay close to Him. After nine other men at CC Costa Mesa, died from other unrelated deaths in the following months, she felt the Lord leading her to start a fellowship where widows could come together, study God’s Word, and encourage each other in the Lord. She started the group, Widows Helping Widows, in 1998. Since then, more than 100 widows have joined the group over the years for fellowship, worship, and prayer.

“We need each other; we need the encouragement of knowing that we’re not going insane, and that we’ll be OK,” said Donna Nunes, who heads the ministry and works full-time at CC Costa Mesa, CA.

The group holds monthly fellowship meetings to worship and pray for one another. She said that the widows learn about how to work through their grief. “Things are different, but ... we’re reaching our ‘new normal.’ Life is going to be normal again, but we’re not necessarily going to like it because grief is grief.” Donna said that widows can go through many challenges: handling their

own grief, dealing with the grief of their children, taking care of finances alone, and other related issues.

“If a person has never been through that, it’s very hard for them to offer helpful counsel,” Donna said. “Sometimes after you lose your husband, you also lose some of your friends. [But the women in the group] support each other in what we’re going through—we try to encourage each other, not just cry together but laugh together as well.”



Donna Nunes

The group also has an eight-week grief workshop, at which widow and speaker Genevieve Douglass helps women through the different steps of grief and encourages them to stay close to the Lord.

The group held a special Widows Retreat last January and is gearing up for another one in January 2009, to which widows from any Calvary Chapel fellowship are welcome to come.

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CC New Brunswick Outreach Ministry

Story by Carol Savage
Photo courtesy of CC New Brunswick

Since 2003, CC New Brunswick's community outreach team has been actively ministering to the people of their city. New Brunswick, NJ, is a growing metropolitan area located halfway between New York City and Philadelphia, PA. It is home to the Rutgers University campus and a diverse population that is showing "an increasing openness toward the Gospel," according to Drew Hammell, director of community outreach at CC New Brunswick.

A unique way in which the believers from the fellowship share the Good News of Jesus Christ is through the "Get-A-Parent" (GAP) program they have started. Several married couples who attend CC New Brunswick have "adopted" 15 Rutgers University students—visiting them in their dorms, providing care packages, and inviting them over for meals. Through this, they have told the students about the Gospel.

Drew and his wife Nancy also led an outreach at the start of the school year with a Labor Day Weekend bash that included an art show, live bands, and the handing out of Gospel tracts and flyers about their fellowship. Plans are in the works for another such festival.

Throughout the school year, the church reaches out to university students with a weekly on-campus Bible study. At the study, which usually draws 8-10 people, students are "very open. They don't argue—they listen," said Drew.

In another community ministry, believers volunteer monthly at a soup kitchen, serving nearly 150 homeless people on a Saturday. They often get to share about the Lord.

Believers also frequently visit the nearby Ronald McDonald House to bring food, offer encouragement, and share tracts with families of seriously ill children.

Drew cited the Book of Nehemiah, in which the walls of Jerusalem are being repaired, as the inspiration for the ministries. He compared the reconstruction of the walls with a renewed interest toward the things of God from New Brunswick residents.

"When I was in college here [nearly a decade ago], people were usually closed to the Gospel," Drew recalled. "They are more open now." He sees it as God rebuilding the spiritual heritage that once existed at the university.



CC New Brunswick believers reach out to locals in need of food, as well as college students and families of seriously ill children.

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CC Fredericktown Youth Mission Trip to NYC

Story by Carol Savage

A group of eight teenagers and three adults from CC Fredericktown, PA, traveled to the Big Apple last April to help bring the Good News to those in need. During the four-day trip, they assisted a "relief bus" that brings meals, clothes, and the message of Jesus to needy people in New York City. Team members served meals, prayed with many, and relayed the message of salvation through tracts and Christian illusionists.

Pam Nuckels, a youth leader at CC Fredericktown, mentioned Proverbs 16:9, which says, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." She stated that the group had prepared for the trip for six months through prayer and evangelism

training. Pam added, "We had our plans ... but the Lord had determined that we would minister to the people by ... showing them [His unconditional] love in action."

The group prayed in transit while they rode on the relief bus, run by an organization called New York City Relief. At their destination, they gave out information, served food and beverages, and prayed with individuals. Many recipients thanked the believers for their help.

The team also performed Gospel-themed illusions for children who gathered at the bus stop and a nearby park. They used the unique presentation to share the Gospel

and overcome language barriers. According to Youth Pastor Kurt Nuckels, "One illusion that was especially effective [was] the 'torn heart.' We would show a large red heart made from paper ... rip the heart into pieces ... talk about how each of our hearts can get broken and hurt—torn—by many things. [We explained that] Jesus can heal our hurting hearts and make us whole again as we restored the torn pieces of paper into a whole heart again."

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