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# HEARTBEAT

DECEMBER 2023

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*Free Methodist World Missions makes disciples by mobilizing the global church and empowering international leaders to establish transformational churches.*



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**Planting and Growing  
Power and Potential in Community  
Equipping for Impact in Asia**



# Planting and *Growing* in Latin America

*By Laura Fitzpatrick*

From the plentiful plains of Argentina to the mountainous coffee-bean farms of Colombia, much of Latin America is known for its fertile soil and lush agricultural environments. The process of cultivating growth – preparing soil, planting seeds, caring for young plants as they develop roots, and harvesting – is woven into the fabric of the region and the work of International Child Care Ministries (ICCM) in Latin America.

For several years, the leaders of the kids' club at the Luz y Vida Free Methodist Church have been developing a community garden in Quito, the capital of Ecuador. Using the available resources (land/soil) located at the church in their neighborhood of Ferroviaria and drawing upon agricultural advice from Quito-based FMC missionary JR Crouse, this is no ordinary garden. With the support and involvement of Luz y Vida pastor José Rivadeneira, they committed themselves to including their community

neighbors – with children as the emphasis – in their agrarian endeavors.

First, they prepared the available soil (weeding, enriching and creating hot and cold planting beds). Following this labor-intensive, time-consuming step, they planted their first crops: cabbage, lettuce, radishes, carrots and beets. An open house was held for children and their families to become familiar with the project.

They organized groups of children to learn about plant care, practice their gardening skills, and make salads with the fruits (vegetables) of their labor. Over time, they have expanded the garden. They even created a guinea pig and rabbit hatchery. This project has provided a unique opportunity for partnership between the local church and ICCM's work with a municipal agency in Quito that promotes organic urban agriculture. Every month, a specialist visits to offer advice on plant and soil care.

This collaborative project – known as Nuevo Eden (“New Eden”) – carries multifaceted goals; many goals center around benefiting children. Luz y Vida kids' club leaders Jazmín Rivadeneira and Graciela Armijos explain, “Our project goals have been to nurture all the children who attend our congregation – to teach their mothers the nutritional value of these products and to teach cooking classes with different options than what they have now.”

They hope to make the garden a sustainable source of produce and additional income. Selling organic, chemical-free produce to support needy children and families in their community would be a dream fulfilled. New Eden meets physical and educational needs in wonderful ways, yet the seeds planted through ICCM's work extend far beyond vegetables.



# Power and Potential in Community

**By Emily Hlavka Freed**

Picture a circle of young Togolese women. They are gathered for the Thrive/Wunders training. Yvonne, the Thrive Kenya leader conducting the training, said, "OK, pretend you are a teacher ... and 'you,' you are an Auntie from church. Bella, pretend you are the nurse." She assigned each person a role in the community circle they had formed.

Yvonne asked one participant to stand in the middle and told the others around the circle to hold hands, making a chain. She explained that each member of the circle represented part of the social safety system for the young woman in the middle, mentioning how each played a vital role in protecting this young woman from vulnerability. Yvonne then instructed the young woman in the middle to try to "break through the safety net." Because they had created such a strong chain, the young woman couldn't break out. Even when she tried to run harder at the "safety net," the other young women worked together to keep her safe in the center.

This fun illustration reminds us of the immense power and potential of community.

Wunders works hand in hand with our partners to help keep girls in school. Each of us plays a role in helping protect those most vulnerable. We work with Thrive Kenya and Thrive Togo. The local leaders of these Set Free Movement teams train students and distribute kits. Wunders primarily distributes and connects with students through our partner, International Child Care Ministries. These organizations are connected through the Free Methodist World Missions network. Together, we are creating a similar "social safety net" for girls around the world.

The outstanding connectivity of the Free Methodist partnerships and our shared impact is so powerful. We praise God for how Wunders can connect and better serve girls and women through these partnerships.

Learn more about Wunders at [wunderspartners.com](https://wunderspartners.com).



# Equipping for *Impact* in Asia

By Rev. Dr. Kevin Austin

Spiritual oppression is real in Cambodia and Thailand. Both countries have significant levels of poverty and oppression. Materialism is the new religion, and drugs are destroying whole communities. Yet, despite the obstacles, God is advancing His mission. The church is maturing and growing.

Recently, I completed theological training about justice and compassion for 50 leaders in these two countries. I was so impressed. Some, despite their lack of formal education, have Spirit-fueled insights and wisdom. They are planting churches, serving with compassion, and having an impact. Some are from oppressed tribal groups. They shared their burdens for people who can't speak the national language, are excluded, and are in great need. Everyone expressed their concerns for the youth lost in technology and drugs.

Together, we discussed the holistic nature of the mission of God. These amazing leaders not only get it; they live it daily in powerful and sacrificial ways. They are not just planting churches; they are planting missions of hope. They evangelize for personal salvation but

also for advancing God's kingdom into villages, tribes, systems and cultures. They serve to meet real needs but understand real needs are not just physical, but spiritual.

They shared their dreams, and we had an extended prayer time at the end of the teaching. They laid their hands on sheets of paper detailing their obstacles, needs and dreams. Their prayers were long and loud for God to *do more than can be asked or imagined according to His power at work in us* (Ephesians 3:20). Amen! God, please hear the prayers.

You can be part of this exciting work. Learn more at [setfreemovement.com](http://setfreemovement.com).

Learn more about our expanding movement of hope and healing at [setfreemovement.com/hopeandhealing](http://setfreemovement.com/hopeandhealing).

Help us pray it forward by joining our E320 Prayer Community at [setfreemovement.us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=0cfa37f1af5493e614c011183&id=ace903ff70](http://setfreemovement.us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=0cfa37f1af5493e614c011183&id=ace903ff70).

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# DECEMBER PRAYER GUIDE

## 01 > **Friday** | **Guinea Bissau**

In early October, more than a dozen people were baptized, including Pastor Rito Mande's mother. Praise the Lord! Pray for the continued growth and discipleship of these new believers.

## 02 > **Saturday** | **Creative Access-MY**

God leads the way as connections with local leaders grow in this country. Pray specifically for a literacy program reaching children.

## 03 > **Sunday** | **Africa**

A chaplain's training took place at Kibogora Hospital in Rwanda in October. Chaplains from three other hospitals attended – Nundu (DRC), Kibuye (Burundi) and Van Norman (Burundi). Pray for chaplains at these four hospitals as they care for the spiritual needs of patients.

## 04 > **Monday** | **Latin America**

Missionary Thad Roller was recently appointed assistant area director for Latin America. Pray for Thad and his family as they adjust to his new role and responsibilities.

## 05 > **Tuesday** | **Middle East**

The Noor Center has a team working with a social media ministry. They now have 7,800 followers and respond to an average of 4,000 messages monthly. Pray for this expanding discipleship method.

## 06 > **Wednesday** | **Romania**

Pray for ministry among children affected by poverty, neglect and trafficking. Ask the Father to raise up more workers to serve here.

## 07 > **Thursday** | **Creative Access-NP**

Praise the Lord! Pastors and leaders in this country are learning inductive Bible study. Pray they can effectively train many coming to faith in Christ.

## 08 > **Friday** | **Hungary**

Erin Kingsley assists in ministry at the women's shelters and the children's homes. As she and other leaders establish relationships in these places, pray the women and children will experience the love and hope of Christ.

**Birthday: Erin Kingsley**

## 09 > **Saturday** | **Panama**

Pray for divine connections, new Christ followers, discipleship opportunities and missional relationships as the new work in Panama expands.

## 10 > **Sunday** | **Creative Access-VN**

Thank the Lord for many young leaders in this country. Pray some can be equipped to effectively serve and share the good news with women, children and youth.

## 11 > **Monday** | **Set Free Movement**

Set Free teams around the world are offering hope to foster children, keeping vulnerable young girls in school through the Wunders program, repatriating children and helping vulnerable refugee populations. Praise the Lord for those being helped and pray for an expansion of Set Free's influence and ministry.

## 12 > **Tuesday** | **Ethiopia**

Pray for peace and stability in Ethiopia. In recent months, some churches in the northern portion of the country had to close because of conflict in the area. Ask God to give continued strength to Superintendent Mekebib Desta as he leads the church in these difficult times.

## 13 > **Wednesday** | **Philippines**

Pray for three student missionaries in the Ilocos region. In September a dormitory Bible study was started. Ask the Father to raise new leaders from this gathering who will boldly share the good news in the university and throughout the Ilocos region.

## 14 > **Thursday** | **Europe**

Pray for new church plants in Sweden, Malta and Finland. Also, pray for developing relationships in Germany and other countries in Europe.

## 15 > **Friday** | **Argentina**

Leaders are learning and being prepared for ministry in the city of Neuquen. Pray for the development of healthy leaders who are well-prepared to share the good news of Jesus with people in Argentina.

**Birthday: Rodrigo Rosado**

## 16 > Saturday | Spain

Pray for the ministry of the Mosaico Cultural Center as they teach English and Spanish language classes, provide after-school tutoring and help immigrants with cultural integration.

## 17 > Sunday | Iraq

Pray many will come to know Jesus through a 20-episode biblical video series (from creation through Christ) for oral learners.

## 18 > Monday | Mali

Pray for Pastor Debora as she coordinates safe places for learning and the discipleship of new believers.

## 19 > Tuesday | Bolivia

Pray for the Free Methodist churches in Bolivia and for Dr. Teresa Saravia, the mission district leader. Ask God to awaken the church and renew their passion for the lost and the work of Christ in their nation.

## 20 > Wednesday | Ukraine

As the war in this nation continues, please remember to pray for peace and stability. Ask God to protect ministry teams and relief workers entering the country and give strength and hope to believers.

## 21 > Thursday | Colombia

A ministry in Las Lomas, one of the poorest communities in Bogota, serves 80-plus children. Pray the Word of God will take root in their hearts and begin to guide and encourage them daily. Pray for growing opportunities to work with their parents.

## 22 > Friday | Thailand

Pray Corey and Connie Persing will have travel safety and good health as they visit and care for ICCM ministries in Thailand and visit other countries to assist leaders.

**Birthday: Connie Persing**

## 23 > Saturday | Senegal

As they face physical and spiritual hostilities, pray for God's protection and provision for the pastors' families.

## 24 > Sunday | Europe

As Christmas is celebrated across the continent, pray Jesus will be made known in fresh new ways to believers and unbelievers alike. Ask God to awaken Europeans to His truth and goodness.

## 25 > Monday | FMWM

On this Christmas day, pray our FMWM missionary team will experience the joy of Christ, their Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

## 26 > Tuesday | Asia

Pray missionary Jill will have joy, peace and discernment as she seeks the Lord regarding her ministry roles in the coming year. **Birthday: Jill**

## 27 > Wednesday | Cameroon

Pray for the Bible-training program that trains local leaders to become church planters and ministers of the gospel. These leaders will be sent to different regions of the country to establish new churches.

## 28 > Thursday | Nicaragua

Pray for a school construction project in Nicaragua. Ask God to open doors and provide the necessary resources.

## 29 > Friday | Middle East

Pray for peace across the region. Pray the vision of peace prophesied in Isaiah 2:4 will come to pass: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

## 30 > Saturday | ICCM

Pray for the ICCM agricultural projects in Africa and Latin America that are helping provide sustainable sources of food and additional income.

## 31 > Sunday | Creative Access-IN

Thank the Lord for fruitful ministry in this nation. Pray for the educational institutions, children's ministries and hospital serving the poor and marginalized. Ask God to use these ministries to offer hope and healing.

*"I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light."*

*– John Keith Falconer*