



# Olive Branch Ministries International



A PARTNERSHIP OF PEACE AND HEALING



# 2011 ~ A Year in Review

Each year, I challenge myself to re-evaluate, recognize and understand the value of this ministry. Having been involved in medical missions for more than 20 years, I find the need to validate the necessity of Olive Branch Ministries. With prayerful discernment as well as taking into account logistics and resources, I continue to believe this work to be important for 3 basic reasons.

First, is the opportunity to provide medical care to populations where it is limited or nonexistent; to provide care for the old, the hungry, the sick, the orphans and homeless; the most disenfranchised people in the world, from Africa to Central and South America.

Second, is the spiritual opportunity in which the Holy Spirit works in people's lives through our team members simply loving them, sharing Christ, praying with patients or simply lending an ear and encouragement to those whose lives are very difficult.

Third, I see this ministry, maybe most importantly, as an avenue to expose people, from the United States, to how 98% of the world lives; in doing so, alter their perceptions of cultures and people, their values and priorities.

As this ministry has progressed and evolved through the years, I have been blessed to see how lives of team members and our patients in other countries have been changed, and how those changes have been manifested, in the development of real relationships with and in Christ. I have experienced, each year, new and exciting God ordained opportunities that have helped me to realize the freshness and currency of the Christianity I profess. I am reminded, the cloak of Christianity as it is worn and as it indwells our very beings is neither old nor out of date, but is as the sun, which introduces a new day.

I hope in the reading of this news letter, you will also see and hear the message of team members and others who work diligently to make Olive Branch a viable and God centered ministry, effecting tens of thousands of lives and souls for more than 10 years. I pray you will see, in the choices we make, that as an organization we are striving to use your resources in new and innovative ways and at the same time, honoring God.



*Photos taken by Spencer Peebles*

## Let The Children Come To Me

By Marian McClaren

When I was first asked to go on a medical mission trip to Nicaragua, I was a little surprised since I have no medical skills. However, I was told that Bible stories could be taught to the children as they were waiting in line for medical assistance. It sounded simple enough at the time and it seemed to be a great opportunity to share Jesus with Nicaraguan children. So I accepted the challenge.



Photos taken by Spencer Peoples

My goal was for as many children as possible to have Bible stories written in their own language so they could take them home and reread them - no small chore for someone who doesn't know any Spanish. With a lot of help from friends and members of my home congregation, the Argyle Church of Christ in Jacksonville, FL., we were able to prepare five lessons on the life of Christ including pages to color and simple crafts for each lesson. All children relish "prizes" and I was told Nicaraguan children consider American necessities as prizes. So, items such as pencils, crayons, toothbrushes and toothpaste, as well as some small toys were gathered to give each child who attended the class.

I went on this trip with the mind set that this was a medical mission trip where medical personnel would be ministering to the Nicaraguan people and I would be there to help the children occupy their time as they waited. I quickly realized that my mission, my responsibility, was to share Jesus' love for children to these little ones.

That was six years ago and I continue to return to Nicaragua every summer with the medical mission team. We go to a different location each year

so I am able to use the same lessons and crafts each year. A few changes have been made but the theme is still basically "The Life of Christ". I have found the Nicaraguan children to be extremely well behaved, appreciative, respectful, attentive, and eager to learn. They will wait in long lines in the heat and rain to get their turn to come to class. Sitting on a concrete floor to color or sitting two children in one chair doesn't bother them as long as they can be a part of the class.

Nothing is more heartwarming than watching children learn songs that tell of the power and love of Jesus and later hearing them sing them while playing in the streets at the end of the week. When we are leaving at the end of the day and see them wearing sheep masks as they go about their daily activities, we know they will remember the Parable of the Lost



Sheep. Seeing them lined up, eagerly waiting for their classes to begin every morning, puts a smile on everyone's face. Sometimes they even cheer and applaud upon our arrival.

Teaching children who are so eager to listen and learn is well worth the time, energy, and money spent on the preparation of the lessons, crafts, and gathering prizes. I always leave wishing I could have given them more time and taught more about God's love.

Mark 10:14 "Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

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*\*Marian McClaren lives in Jacksonville, FL.*



## Experiencing Christ through Medical Missions in Nicaragua

By Shamini Parameswaran

Every morning I would be awakened by honking buses and cars, while the sun's bright rays of light would stream through the windows. As I woke up, I would be reminded of a scene out of *Annie*: the long room with 10 beds against the walls, all occupied by sleeping girls. Our day would start around 5:30 am with each girl taking turn on using the one bathroom (yes 10 girls managed to make one bathroom work!). After getting dressed and eating breakfast, it was off to start our day. In the beginning of the week, I started off with the well project. I was very excited about building this well as it was a goal I had in mind all semester long back home at TTUHSC. I always knew that 2 weeks in a third world country would not be enough to solve all of its problems, so why not leave something behind that would at least help alleviate some of its problems even when we are no longer there. Hence,

I came to the conclusion of providing clean water, and what better way of providing this than by building a well. Thanks to a local Lubbock church, we were able to fund the entire project. We started Monday of the first week and drove up the mountain (one of the most exciting and scariest adventures I've ever had) and found the site where the well would be built. The men were extremely hard working and taught me exactly what to do to get the project started. Basically we would build 12 round cement tubes that would be lowered into the ground as they dug the hole for the well. I was fortunate to have my classmate, Chris

Skillern, alongside the first day and then was joined by another, Michael Aterno, the second day. It was us three, along with Mark, an intern and translator at the Mision, Clint Patterson, a middle school science teacher, as well as the well building team composed of men from the local community of Sarasquesca. It was hard work, but very rewarding as many children of the community came to watch us and see what we were up to. Constantly asking for gum and stickers, these

children would keep us on our feet and we honestly loved every moment.

Unfortunately, we could not see the completion of the well because it was currently the rainy season and the hole would keep flooding with water. But Mark told us the project would definitely finish at the end of rainy season, so hopefully here in a few months we will see the completed well. What a blessing it was to be



part of God's plan for this community. To be able to provide the gift of clean water, I know, will go a long way and I only have Christ to thank for helping my classmates and I to be part of such an amazing project.

After a few days of building the well, I switched over to the medical missions portion of the trip. First, I went to the Yali clinic, a stationary clinic established to serve the people of Yali. I will never forget just how long the line was outside of the clinic; I couldn't believe that some of these people had been waiting since 4 or 5 am! Immediately I got to work by following Dr. Edwards, one of the clinicians, and helping him. We



saw many interesting cases throughout the day and after a few hours, I switched to the triage portion of the clinic where I would take down symptoms and blood pressure if needed of all patients. I would say the triage portion is the most exhausting part of the clinic as it requires a lot of time and energy not just on my part but on the translators as well. But I enjoyed it very much, not to mention got better at taking blood pressures! I think the one patient that really touched me one day was when a daughter and father came in and the father stated that his daughter had epileptic seizures for 12 years. Immediately, I thought of the story in the Bible that speaks of the woman who bled for 12 years and after touching the cloak of Christ, was she healed. I will never forget how Dr. Edwards approached this man as he went on to say, “We can only leave this to God and pray for a healing.” Never in all my life had I seen a physician bring in God as part of his treatment, so I was ecstatic when I heard him say this. Immediately, I started praying in my head and though I will never know what happened to them after they left, I did learn one important lesson that day. We as physicians may not always have the right treatments or answers for people, but we can for sure leave our trust in Christ and know that He will take care of what we have no control over. I just love learning life lessons in the clinic!

The next day I joined the traveling team. This was an experience in itself! We drove for about two hours before coming to a very rural area in the mountains. It was absolutely beautiful! We set up for clinic and

before an hour had even passed, we had an audience before us, all lined up with their children ready to get their check-ups. I had a great time following the physicians around and learning all different types of medicine and seeing different things, stuff I would have never imagined to find back in the states. During one of the breaks we took, we decided to blow bubbles with the kids. What an adorable experience this was! I’ve never seen children so excited over something as simple as bubbles and it was apparent that their worst fears were out the door as soon as we blew bubbles of laughter their way. It really was a good day, learned a lot, and most of all, shared the love of Christ!

Nicaragua will definitely be an experience I will never forget. In fact, it has only motivated me to pursue more medical mission trips for the future. We have been blessed with so much growing up in the US; it is only fair to share this wealth around the globe using the skills God has blessed us with. I thank Olive Branch Ministries and Mision Para Cristo for their immense help and support in helping this mission trip to be such a great success! What an honor it was to be part of God’s kingdom work this summer, I only pray the Lord blesses me with more opportunities in the future as I grow in His calling to become a physician for Christ.

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*\*Shamini Parameswaran is a medical student in Lubbock, TX at TTUHSC School of Medicine*



## Nation's Church of Christ

**Fort Portal, Uganda** *By Ronald Kizito*

I greet you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I thank Olive Branch Ministries International(OBMI) for the work you are doing to help the less fortunate of this world. Specifically, on behalf of the Nations church of Christ (NCC) and my own behalf, let me take this opportunity to thank you for supporting our work in Fort Portal, Uganda and the surrounding communities.

It has been a blessing to have OBMI to speak on our behalf to supporters of the work of the Lord in Uganda. This past year OBMI has responded to a number of our needs and opportunities.

In February, Olive Branch Ministries paid to have a medical campaign here in Fort Portal. Uganda is a country where the average person lives on less than \$1.00 US dollar per day. After some discussion Scott and I decided it would be more fiscally responsible to seek out a well-trained Uganda medical team rather than spend \$80,000+ to bring a team from the United States. Therefore, OBMI paid for the expense to have the Uganda medical team.

In February 2011, our medical campaign was launched. The medical team consisted of dentists, internal medicine specialists, two gynecologists, eight nurses, lab technicians to test for HIV, 3 counselors, public health workers, and several ministers from local churches, who helped to care for the spiritual needs of the patients coming to the clinic. A local pharmacy agreed to provide the medications for the patients.

During our four-day campaign over 2,200 people were ministered to for both their physical and spiritual needs. They came from as far as the Congo for treatment since most all systems for health care in the Congo have broken down due to the continuing rebel activity and yes they came in large numbers. Ugandan's alike, they heard that Olive Branch Ministries was once again helping our community by providing this medical campaign, came in droves.

I will tell you, much was accomplished, because while physical treatments were being conducted, ministers were sharing the Word of Christ with them. At the end of the clinic over 22 people had given their lives to Christ and we walked them to the river and

baptized them. The amazing part was that most of these men and woman were from the Congo and it was plain to see they were truly thirsting and needed to hear the message of hope and encouragement for they have gone through so much.

After baptizing them, one man pulled me aside and said now that we have given our lives to Christ how do we go about encouraging and fellowshiping with each other for we have no meeting place since we live in a refugee camp. My response was for them to meet in each other's huts, but there was none big enough to accommodate the group so I told him to simply go from hut to hut praying with each other until God provides you with an answer. He seemed to like the idea and began following through on the plan. As it turned out with each hut he visited the group grew by several other people each time they moved to another hut. By the end the group was large and came to a man's hut and he was so moved that he tore down his 2 huts and built a new, larger one as a place of worship. I visit with them to worship from time to time and the church has grown from 18 to 134. Thanks to God for using OBMI and the medical campaign to extend the borders of his Kingdom.

Also, this year the roof of our church building blew completely off just after services one Sunday. I tell you God blessed the church for we had just left the building when the storm came up and destroyed the roof. Thanks to OBMI paying for us to replace the roof of our building.

Our church has been so blessed over the last 4 years; since we began with only 3 individuals, we have now grown to over 540. Our old building could only seat nearly 300 so we have been in great need to expand. So in addition Olive Branch agreed to pay \$10,000.00 toward our new building and site. Now with the support of other brethren, we have been able to put up a metal church structure here at NCC.

Thank you, my brother, Scott, so very much for the love, support, care and prayers for NCC. You have always been there for us. My God continue to bless your efforts and those of OBMI, all over the world.

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*\*Ronald Kizito is a minister at Nations Church of Christ.*

# "Ayúdanos a Ayudar"

"Help Us Help Them" *By Carlos Martinez*

Sometimes we dream that the world should be equal for everyone, but unfortunately it is not, the reality we face is completely different. But it is up to us to make this change and therefore we hope you can all help us do it.

These dreams are the ones that we are working hard to make happen. Dreaming of getting ahead, being better and having the facilities is easy for us because we have everything, but not for them. However, these children do not stop smiling despite

thankful to God for everything He gives us. So now, it is our turn to help.

In the last 4 months we have collected many donations such as shoes, clothing, toiletries, toys, etc.; and overall much unconditional love from friends, family and even from people we have not met at all, but we know they have a good heart. Our campaign is still going on, and we do not want it to end, because the needs of these children are present every day. We have delivered all donations of



the fact that what they have is very little. That is why we started this campaign to help those more than 850 dreams turn into 850 smiles. And we are succeeding!

A group of Peruvian translators that have been working with Olive Branch are more than committed to helping the community of children "Sagrada-Familia". We feel part of their lives, we know their stories, we have seen them growing and we have learned that life is a constant struggle with high and low moments, good and bad times but mostly with a thousand dreams to fulfill.

The campaign "Ayúdanos a ayudar" was launched on the initiative of all of us because of our desire to do more for the children. Every time we go to the community, our hearts leap with excitement and joy, we learn that life is not easy and we should be

these four months; we made a party to raise money to buy what is missing. Our plan to paint the community has not been possible during this time but we know that God will help us find a way to get what we want. We are waiting for His signal and we hope that this dream to see the painted houses comes true.

There is still much to do. This is only the beginning of something that will change their lives and our lives. It is the beginning of a change to make all Peruvians become aware of how important it is to help, how much we can do if we all work together. It is comforting to see smiles, feel a hug, share, and above all to realize that all dreams can come true.

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*\*Carlos Martinez lives in Piura, Peru.*



# 1000 Smiles . . .

By Cyndy Miller

God warmed our hearts with a thousand SMILES each day during our July trip to Comunidad de Ninos Sagrada Familia in Peru. There are over 900 children at the community and then we brought 99 team members and 33 translators. There were SMILES and hugs as we got off the bus and the children were there to greet us! It was a joyous reunion for many and a new adventure for others who were there for the first time. The SMILES turned to laughter, hugs, conversations, and kisses on the cheek as we spent time with our small groups each day.

There were so many heart warming SMILE moments, but here are a few that will stay with me forever. Each morning, we have worship time all together in the chapel. This year God sent a Spanish-speaking youth minister with lots of energy to lead this time together. It was such a precious sweet time each morning, listening to children singing praises to God! I still SMILE remembering those sweet mornings! There was so much laughter and a thousand SMILES as we began our yearly scavenger hunt again. I love the moments I see Miguel wandering around the community SMILING as he watches over his children and can see the joy in their faces. I can imagine God doing the same thing, watching from above and SMILING as he sees his children spending time in community with one another. SMILES, as a little boy is able to begin walking at 6 years old because

friends from an earlier trip, worked hard to get the resources needed to help him walk. I am SMILING as I watch my little boys running toward me yelling "Cyndy" and getting ready to share our special "finger kisses"! There are SMILES as the children share their artwork. We are continually amazed at the creativity we see from all of the children. Photo day is always a highlight as we give each child a pic-



ture of them self! There are so many SMILES, sharing bible stories, funny hats, soccer, talking, creating, playing games, kazoos, building, stamps, balloons and just spending time with very special friends. The SMILES and laughter are contagious!

God has blessed our time together! He has given us the time and money to share a week with these wonderful children and in spending time together we are given many gifts.

He reminds us to leave ourselves behind and share his love with others. We have left a large part of our hearts in Peru and have brought 1000 SMILES home!

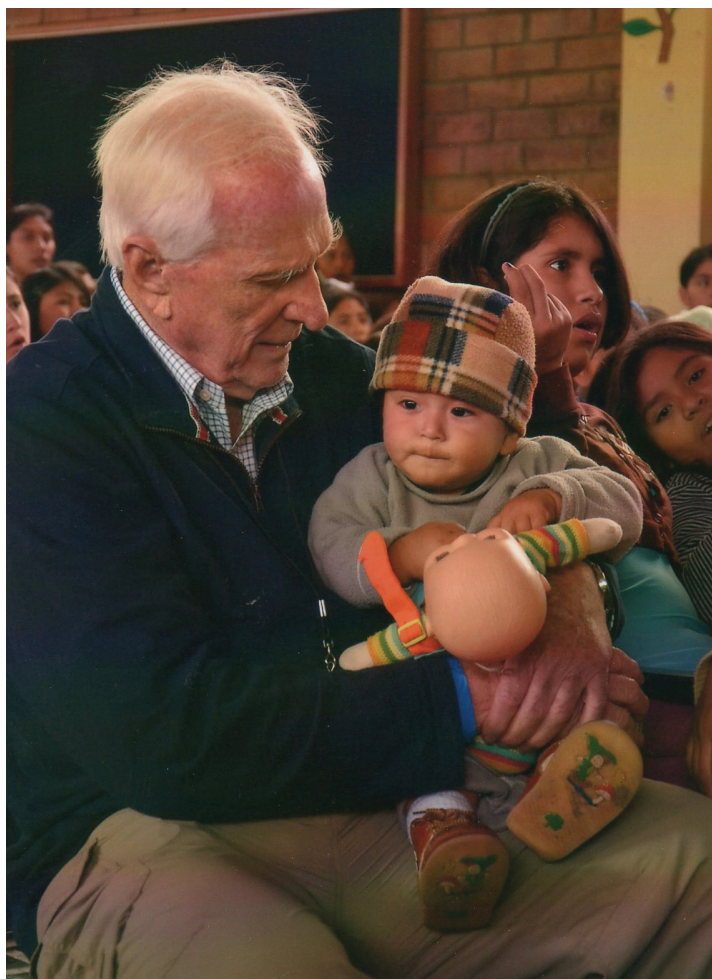
As we began to leave on Friday, the SMILES are a little forced as tears began to fall and we think about precious children of God and memories to last a lifetime.

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*\*Cyndy Miller lives in Austin, TX and gives months of her time each year to plan the activities we participate in with the children each day.*



*Photos taken by Spencer Peebles*





# Let's Start Talking

By Phil Ware

This is my second visit to Hogar Sagrada Familia (the Community). I helped organize a test run of reading English using Let's Start Talking (LST) materials from the book of Luke. These materials offered us an opportunity to read and discuss Bible content with very bright English speaking high school and university students from the Community.

After working with the morning program in our casas on a VBS like curriculum, our LST teams moved into different locations in the 5 acres compound after lunch to make ourselves available. The reading places are primitive, but work for us. The level of English is varied, but surprisingly good. The students are eager to improve their English. Great dialogue and questions emerge from these

high school and university students. These students asked far more questions about the content, life and faith than any group I have read with – in other words, they were interested in reading specifically because the materials had to do with faith in Jesus. Most of the students know the Bible stories or teachings because of the influence of Mario Calle's work on curriculum and as a Bible teacher and counselor.

This test run of LST went well and I look forward to continuing to find ways to use LST to reach out to the high school and university students at the Community.

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*\*Phil Ware lives in Abilene, TX and is one of the ministers for Southern Hills Church of Christ.*



Photo taken by Spencer Peebles



# Serving In Loma Negra



*Photo taken by Teresa Steele*

In October twenty-three team members plus translators were blessed to work with Oscar and Ana Castro in Loma Negra, Peru. Oscar, Ana and other members of the church in Piura have been working with the community of Loma Negra for about 4 years. Their outreach started through ministering to children. They were anxious for a medical team to come and show God's love meeting many physical and spiritual needs.

The school principal allowed us space in the school for our clinic. We provided basic health care, dental extractions and eyeglasses. One team member, a trained counselor, was available to talk with patients experiencing trauma in their lives. We also had several team members who dedicated their time to teaching Bible lessons to the children. Think about that for a minute – they went into a public school and taught the Bible.

While our doctors were providing care, the needs of a mother carrying her growing child everywhere and those of other older people touched the hearts of our team and we were able to locate and buy

wheel chairs to make the lives of 5 individuals and their families a little easier.

We always recognize the tremendous value of our translators, but in one instance, a translator, Jessica, was able to help insure that a baby with a cleft palate would be helped. Her father, an ENT, knew of a Smiles team coming to work in the community. Through

coordination, the baby was registered for surgery. We expect, from information received, that by the time you read our newsletter, the surgery will have been completed and this child's life will be changed forever.

Another, of our doctors, saw a young woman who had a tumor next to her eye. Jessica, once again, contacted her father who was able to arrange for the woman to see a specialist. Olive Branch Ministries agreed to cover her medical expenses in order to determine the nature of her problem. OBM is awaiting the outcome of tests to determine her needs. Jessica and Carlos, both translators important to our work, have arranged and accompanied this woman and her husband to attend doctor's appointments and are keeping us informed as to the diagnosis and steps to be taken next.

Obviously, without Jessica and her father, we would not have made this happen as quickly. We thank God for putting in place the right people, before we can know the need and for allowing us to be part of His plan.

*I want to thank each of you who participate in our work.*

*Olive Branch Ministries would be nothing without those of you who support us financially, pray for us regularly, and set aside time and finances to participate as team members on our trips.*

*As with most nonprofit organizations (especially small ones like Olive Branch) funding and resources are tight. Over the years our effort has been to provide, our team members, trips with reasonable costs. Today, in our current economy the price to do campaigns are on the rise, while salaries and resources of individuals are either declining or at best remaining the same.*

*Considering our financial environment, the coming year will challenge our efforts to continue to provide cost effective trips. Our work is going to depend greatly upon the generosity of those, of you, who are called and willing to fund Olive Branch. We ask for your prayerful consideration of how you can help. Obviously, asking for money is always a difficult task, but with 5 trips this year, additional funding will be needed to increase or even continue our same level of work.*

*We want each of you to know how grateful we are for your mere consideration of helping us. Those of you who have continued to fund our work consistently for many years have our deepest appreciation. We recognize your partnership in our work and trust God is blessing you as you have blessed others and us. In closing, I sincerely pray each of you will have a happy holiday season and a blessed new year.*

*Scott E. Zapalac*



## *Olive Branch Ministries International*

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[www.olivebranchministriesinternational.com](http://www.olivebranchministriesinternational.com)

Scott Zapalac  
[scott@obmintl.com](mailto:scott@obmintl.com)  
806.319.2626

Malena Rampy  
[malena.rampy@gmail.com](mailto:malena.rampy@gmail.com)  
512.293.7454