



Robert and Valerie Creech – to PANAMA

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Dear Brethren,

Valerie and I returned to the U.S. on the 8th to spend Christmas and New Year with family and church. Lord willing, we will be back in Panama in January. We attended the memorial service for Lee Pflueger, wife of Al Pflueger, near Harrison, Arkansas, former missionaries in Honduras. She left behind a great testimony of love and service which was evident in the memories shared by her husband and children.

Missionaries to the Big Island of Hawaii, Tim and Annette Chace, called us recently with an invitation to visit them in January, 2019. They want to reach a number of Central Americans there with the Gospel. Some have been attending their services, but do not speak much English. It seems that there are quite a few Salvadorans who work in the coffee plantations near Kona, on the Big Island. We are planning to have an evangelistic outreach to the workers on the plantations, and special services to preach to them in Spanish. Please pray that the Lord would be glorified in these efforts. Interestingly, there is a young lady from Usulután, El Salvador, attending the services faithfully in Penonomé, here in Panamá. We certainly live in an interconnected world. Please pray about the upcoming outreach.

After much prayer and consideration, Bro. Cristóbal Yañez and I have set goals for the distribution of the textbooks, Learn with Jesus in the upcoming 2019 school year. The Lord blessed the distribution in 2018 by practically doubling what we expected to do. A total of 22,947 books were delivered to public schools throughout Panama, into Arquía and Caimán Negro in Colombia, Iquitos, Peru, and the border of Venezuela with Colombia. The following page has the details about our plans for the coming year, with some information about each targeted area, and the date of the start of the 2019 school year. The Lord is expanding this project every year, both in number of books distributed, and in opening up new areas.

FROM VALERIE

After 26 years of living in a warm, tropical climate, I must admit that my tolerance for cold weather is nearly nonexistent now. Everything in Panama is warm! Tap water is tepid, metal items are all warm; all things are warm. No need for a coat EVER! You can even eat slowly and take time with your coffee. Best of all that's warm are the people of Panama. They are the warmest people in the world to me. They use the phrase "*calor humano*", which translates "*human warmth*", but really expresses the importance they place on warm personal relationships. It's a very high priority. Thank you all for your continued prayers.

Yours in Christ, *Robert and Valerie Creech*

We checked with the Ministry of Education and got the current enrollment figures and hope to fill these areas with the schoolbooks. The 2019 school year is scheduled to start March 10, 2019.

The **Azuero peninsula** consists of two provinces, **Herrera and Los Santos**, and has a total of **16,434** elementary students. This is the most "traditional" region of the country and has been very resistant to the efforts made to preach the Gospel. We think that now is time to distribute the schoolbooks there. An interesting sign of the Lord's hand in answering our prayers was what happened at the recent funeral of Cristóbal's aunt. As is the custom here, the government sent delegations of government employees to the funeral since she had worked as a government pharmacist for many years. One of the people was the head of the Ministry of Education in Los Santos. She got to talking to Cristóbal, and as he explained about the books, she promised to facilitate our efforts to get them in the schools there by writing an official letter authorizing us and recommending us to the local school directors. That will be a big help.



The province of **Darién** borders Colombia and has been a dangerous area for years. Now that the Colombian guerrillas have signed a peace agreement, things have opened up. There are two main groups to target in this province, the Embera Wounan with a total of **2090** elementary students, and the regular schools, with a total of **7538**, giving a total of **9,628** books needed to cover the province.

A third burden that we have is to fill the schools in **the Kuna islands (San Blas)** with the books. There are **5,808 students** altogether. Cristóbal and I went there back in March of this year and spent a week as the guests of a national Baptist pastor. Unlike other areas of Panama, there are 27 Baptist churches on the islands and the brethren are trying to reach the remaining islands that don't have churches. While we were there, we donated 1,000 books to schools on two islands and we met for a couple of days with pastors from other islands. They pleaded with us to give books to all the schools. We would like to do that.

The printers in Santiago who print the books for us have been a great blessing. Last year they themselves gave us 2,000 books free of charge. We had a meeting with them recently and they said that they needed to raise the price per book because of rising costs, but instead of raising the price 60 cents per book, which they said was realistic, they were only going to go up 13 cents per book. This makes our cost now \$2.14. They said they are not making any profit on printing the books, but they have noticed that God is blessing them in the other areas of their business.

Anyway, we are asking the Lord to let us get books to these three areas as donations. A total of **31,870** students at a cost of **\$2.14** comes to **\$68,201.80**. It seems impossible, but each year the Lord has increased what has been possible to do in the schoolbook project. We continue to ask Him to get a book to every single child in the country.