

# Christmas Traditions

*It's the most wonderful time of the year! ... as the song goes. We feel so privileged to be able to stand in for the hundreds of Latin America ChildCare sponsors who give so that their sponsored children can have a gift at Christmas. For a child, our tradition of giving gifts is a simple act of kindness, a tangible reminder that someone cares about them.*

But it is something more for a Latin America ChildCare sponsored children. For someone who they don't know personally cares about them. For these children, sponsors are seen as "padrinos" or godparents who love them and often provide for them at times when their parents are unable to do so. They are "spiritual" parents, representatives of our Heavenly Father--unseen, yet kind and generous!

There are many Christmas traditions for Panamanian children and families. We have enjoyed reading and translating the second correspondence project that the LACC children have completed for their sponsors. The project was "How we celebrate Christmas in my country." We read letter after letter of ways that children and their families celebrate Christmas.

Christmas eve is very important. Families gather together, enjoy a special Christmas meal, exchange gifts and stay up late. The evening ends with a fireworks display sometime after midnight! Their holiday meal includes "rosca" (woven) bread, tamales (made in a banana leaf), rice and chicken... "patio" or range chicken is the best! For children, their favorite dessert is fruit--apples and grapes.

We have two Guaymi Indian schools in the communities of Duima and Soloy, located in the northwest part of Panama. Christmas is new for many in the Ngobe Bugle tribe. Catholic traditions have not penetrated this area. And the gospel has only taken hold in the last two or three decades in this region.

The letters that these children wrote to their sponsors were quite different. Yarilyn (photo and letter below) who attends the Soloy school writes,

*"We don't celebrate Christmas in my house. I want to celebrate Christmas, but I live with just my mom and she is poor. My dad doesn't help and I don't have any money. But I'm happy because my school has a Christmas party for us and I get a present and good food."*

The Latin America ChildCare Christmas parties at these two schools are helping children and families develop new Christmas traditions. In these two schools and 30 more, we are able to place in the hands of hundreds of sponsored children a special gift given by their sponsors. This simple tradition reminds them that their "spiritual" parents truly care about them.

On behalf of hundreds of happy children who are learning about Jesus, we say thank you to those that sponsor one or more of them through Latin America ChildCare. Your generosity is helping teach them lasting Christmas traditions. And thank you to all who "sponsor" us so that we can be here for them!

Rod and Sherry





How we celebrate *Christmas* in my country ...

Como celebramos la *Navidad* en mi país ...

*En mi casa no se celebran navidad, yo si quiero celebrar mi navidad pero mi mamá y papá no saben como, yo me ayudo a hacer la fiesta. Yo tengo plata. Yo me siento feliz y me gusta mucho la fiesta que hacen aquí en la escuela porque hacen buenas cosas para nosotros como...*



*There's more on the reverse side... Raising Up Harvest Workers*

# Raising Up Harvest Workers

Jesus said, *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field”* (Mt. 9:37-38). The need is so great and there aren't enough workers! God has called us to raise up leaders among our Spanish-speaking brothers, who God is calling to take their place as harvest workers here and around the world. We are privileged to enable leaders, equip teachers and provide resources to make this possible.

For the 20 Spanish-speaking countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region, ministerial training – the preparation of pastors, missionaries and church workers – takes place in a network of more than 1,000 Bible schools, extension sites and training centers. There are currently 35,000 students preparing for ministry in these centers. Most of these men and women will become pastors and ministry leaders in the 40,000 Assemblies of God churches in the region. However, many will evangelize and plant new churches in under-reached areas. Some will become missionaries to un-reached people groups around the world and will go to countries that are closed to missionaries from the United States.

The strength of the Latin America ministerial training program is the army of nearly 6,000 volunteer teachers. The vast majority are pastors who take time from their busy schedules to invest in current and future harvest workers. They are not full-time teachers and most have not received adequate preparation to teach. In fact, our Latin American leaders have consistently identified teacher training as the area most critical to our program that needs to be strengthened.

The Latin America Resource and Training Center began the PROCEPA program in 2008 in response to this need. PROCEPA is the training and certification program for Bible school professors in Spanish-speaking Latin America. Teachers are required to take 10 two-hour workshops to

earn their basic certification. In addition, they are required to take six workshops every two years to renew their certification. Many are able to attend PROCEPA workshops that are offered at the international Educators Summits we conduct every two years. But most attend workshops at national PROCEPA seminars that we organize for interested countries.

Teachers and leaders have enthusiastically embraced the PROCEPA program. As we finish the sixth year of PROCEPA, we are happy to report that there are now more than 3,500 teachers enrolled and participating in the program! 2013 was especially busy and productive for PROCEPA. There were PROCEPA workshops conducted in eight countries during the year: El Salvador, Uruguay, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. This year alone, enrollment increased by 1,170!

A total of 368 have completed their basic certification. We believe there will be another 400 that will complete their basic certification at the two Educators Summits next year (El Salvador, March 10-13, 2014 and Uruguay, Sept. 8-11, 2014). Of the 368 that finished their basic level, 156 have begun their refresher workshops.

Please pray for us as we continue to develop the PROCEPA ministry. As we reported earlier, Miguel and Maria Morales will be joining us in Panama in the coming months. They are currently itinerating in the United States, raising prayer and financial support. We have asked Miguel to direct this ministry and can't wait for his “boots to be on the ground” here in Panama! We are also grateful to a large group of missionaries and national leaders who regularly teach PROCEPA workshops. But we need more workshop leaders!

Please pray for the teachers who receive PROCEPA training, that when they return to their classrooms they will be more inspired and

better equipped to teach and challenge their students to prepare themselves as harvest workers for God. And together let's ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into the harvest!



## PRAYER NEEDS & PRAISE REPORTS

- Praise the Lord for the three-acre parcel of land designated by the Panama A/G for the Latin America Resource and Training Center!
- Please pray with us for the wisdom, favor and provision as work begins on site and architectural plans, site preparation and building for the Latin America Resource and Training Center.
- Praise the Lord for the impact of the recently conducted National PROCEPA Seminars in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Nearly 600 attended these three teacher training events.
- Please pray for our 35 Good Shepherd Schools in Panama, many of them facing construction of additional classrooms to accommodate growth. Pray for Randy and Lynne as they reach out to help these schools.
- Please pray for the more than 300 children who need an LACC sponsor. If you can one of these, please visit: [www.Panama.LACC4Hope.org](http://www.Panama.LACC4Hope.org).
- Please pray for the planning of the two Educators Summits coming up in El Salvador (March 2014) and Uruguay (Sept. 2014). Also, please pray for the remaining national PROCEPA Seminars (teacher certification) that will take place this fall in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

