



An example of what a home visit looks like. Pictured here are George, Vicar Elvis Carrera, and one of our short-term team members, discussing the basics of what Lutherans believe.



Pastor Osmel introduces the entire short-term team and accompanying missionaries to the children at one of our *charlas*. Here, we are visiting a village on the outskirts of Lima, located on a hillside (which we had to take a *mototaxi* or *tuk tuk* to get to!).

“My home is small but my heart is big!” George’s welcome perfectly sums up my time spent

in Lima, Peru this month. With a smile on his face and welcoming embrace, George greeted me and part of our short-term team who served in Lima in February. This team was my first outside the Dominican Republic and the first Community Health Evangelism (CHE), Mercy Medical Team (MMT) done in Latin America. Accompanying me and the team of 6 medical professionals and laypeople from the US were two fellow missionaries from the DR, Erin and Jamielynn.

The purpose of this team was to walk alongside the pastors and vicar in Lima to share the Gospel and provide some tidbits of health knowledge along the way. The team offered educational health *charlas*, or talks, for various communities in which the LCMS team on the ground is working. These talks included topics such as nutrition, eye health, handwashing, teeth brushing, and first aid. Each of the team members had opportunities to share their lessons with people of a variety of ages in a variety of locations arranged by our pastors. I helped interpret and assist the pastors and team members with questions they had or tasks to be done during activities.

An impactful aspect of our week consisted of spending two full days doing home visits with the pastors and vicar in Lima. Home visits are an essential piece of evangelism in Latin America. These typically consist of pastors, deaconesses or church members visiting one another and sharing time in fellowship. Each visit looks slightly different but usually includes conversations about what’s going on in the family’s life, a scripture reading, prayer, encouragement and of course, sharing a drink or snacks. In a relationship-based society like Peru, spending time with one another, sharing in the ups and downs of life, and plentiful greetings of hugs and kisses on the cheek are the most important way to connect with one another and share the Gospel.

It is here where I heard stories of love, joy, pain, abuse, suffering, and fear. I sat on tattered stools and chairs while our hosts stood to make room for us in their one-room homes. I shed tears and felt the deep pain of heartache as my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ shared their stories with us North American strangers. I played with children and shared freshly made



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Courtney in Latin America



empanadas. I made new friends and encouraged fellow believers in their Christian walks of life. I prayed with them and laughed with them. But most importantly I heard our hosts preach Christ crucified. I saw the hope and love of Jesus shine in their eyes as well as their hands and feet in service to us. I saw how their faith and God's goodness can sustain any amount of brokenness and agony. The words of James 4:10 came to mind as church members continuously apologized for their humility: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." And the Lord is indeed lifting up His people in Lima, no matter where they come from or where they are now. We are especially reminded during this Lenten season to come before the Lord in our humility so that someday we may be resurrected again.

We also spent time at the Mercy House *Castillo Fuerte* (appropriately named *Mighty Fortress*) connected to the church in Los Olivos. During the school year, *Castillo Fuerte* runs an afterschool program which provides lunch, Scripture teachings, and homework help for students in the area. As the summer program was wrapping up the week we were there, we got to see what the kids had been working on throughout the summer and give a few *charlas* on the aforementioned health topics. It was so special spending time with the kids after meeting their families in their homes and seeing the joy explode from their little hearts as they played together in a safe space. My heart aches for them and their families and the situations they face day in and day out. However, God continues to remind me that His love and mercy never cease, no matter where we are in the world or how broken we may feel.

God is at work in Lima, and I've seen it. What an encouragement it was to walk alongside our pastors and vicar for a week and experience the trials and triumphs they experience on a daily basis. Just as Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom, so also our church workers around the world share the Gospel with their neighbors and reach the lost. Join me in asking the Lord of harvest to continue sending workers into his field as the harvest is indeed plentiful though the workers are few (Matthew 9). Thanks be to God for this incredible trip to Peru!



The children at *Castillo Fuerte* doing an activity with the short-term team. Here they are categorizing foods based on which food group they belong to!

Verse of the month!

"Ciertamente la gracia de Dios los ha salvado por medio de la fe. Esta no nació de ustedes, sino que es un don de Dios; ni es resultado de las obras, para que nadie se vanaglorie." Efesios (Ephesians) 2:8-9

Prayer Requests

- For our pastors, vicars, and seminary students serving the Lord in Peru.
- For our church members in Lima: Maribel, Walter, and Diana and their families. For strength, comfort and peace in their trials.
- For missionaries around the world, bringing Jesus to the most forgotten areas.
- Thanksgiving for continued baptisms and confirmations at each of our churches in the DR.

Be on the lookout for an upcoming article in *Lutherans Engage the World* about this short-term team and the work going on in Lima, Peru!

To support the LCMS through me, you may give a tax-deductible gift:

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