



PCCR

PLAIN COMPASSION CRISIS RESPONSE



COLOMBIA

MARCH - APRIL 2020

Today was awesome. We supplied 160 families with food in 5 different places altogether. I found it fulfilling knowing how it blessed the people. Some of them were very recently displaced and had very little of even bare necessities. It was heartbreaking seeing their desperate situations and thinking that what we're giving will only go so far...

There weren't many men at most of these places and we wondered why. We were told it's because either they stayed back or were killed. Approximately 75 percent of these women came here without their husbands. Many of the men stayed back because they weren't able to cross into this area because of the political party they were part of, so they sent their wives and children off knowing they'd be safer here than at home. Needless to say, these families are going through a lot right now.

I had an amazing, joy-filling time making connections with some of the children and ladies despite knowing only a few words/phrases in Arabic. Praise God, language barrier doesn't keep the joy and love of Jesus from flowing through us. Tonight I had to think, 'now I know (at least part of) why God wanted me to come here'. This giving of love.. joy.. smiles. And a few words of blessing. These are seeds. And seeds are valuable. Even if it seems like such a small thing in the moment.

- Lena Joy



Food distribution in a refugee camp near Raqqa in Syria. The people are from Idlib



Destruction in Raqqa



A young girl from Idlib in Raqqa, Syria



Hopeless eyes in Raqqa



The community center, and the Syrian border project has been shut down for eight weeks already because of the Coronavirus.

The entire area has been on lockdown for five weeks now. Three weeks ago, the only people who had permission to travel on the roads were military and medical personnel, humanitarian aid organizations that are providing critical care, and people that are moving food, household, and medical supplies. There were thousands of police, and soldiers patrolling the roads in Kurdistan. They were stationed at the traffic lights, and all the intersections that had any significant value. They were still blocking off more roads, and were even bringing in new, portable buildings for the soldiers and police to stay in as they are on shift at these checkpoints. Three weeks ago, it looked like they might be preparing for a lockdown that could last months. Today, they are loosening the restrictions, checkpoints are being removed, more people can travel, and the stores are opening again.

Some of our team is doing an online TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program, putting hours into language study, and visiting the neighbors. For the last three weeks we have had full time work partnering with two Kurdish NGO's, and are making face masks five days a week. They will be given to the Department of Health.

There is an increasing amount of IDP's that are running out of food. These are people that lost their jobs during the last four weeks. We have also been doing some food distributions to struggling families which were greatly appreciated, however we haven't done much of it, because of the problem of getting funding over here. The eight days we spent in Syria were amazing. It was probably one of the most enjoyable things I did in the middle east. I would like to open a base in Raqqa later this year, however I'm sensing that many things could change worldwide, during and after the shutdown. We also want to fly to Jordan sometime, get a Syrian visa, then go into Damascus, and Aleppo. The Syrian regime areas are open to Americans, and American NGO's. Currently everything is on hold, and we are finding a new normal. The needs change during a time like this, however they are still there. I expect we will pick up more work as this continues. I feel so many things changing that I don't know what to expect. We are taking one step, and one day at a time.

Thanks for your prayers and support. We appreciate what you do. ~ Daniel



Sewing Masks



Food distribution in Iraq



Second food distribution



Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:31. Greetings in the Master's name! Life here in Arauca, Colombia has been a whirlwind this last month! God is Good and it is His unchanging Goodness that is keeping us going and prospering the work.

As always, one of the greatest challenges is a good balance of work and ministry. There is so much to be done which demands that we go faster, do more, streamline our techniques, etc. As I reflect upon this past month, I realize that it's not about balance but rather about a heart that is fixed upon Him. Can work and ministry be separated? It's a clear call back to the cross when I find myself trying to get into a ministry mindset because the clock says it's time. It must be a state of being. Ministry to my wife, children, team, and household servants is no less important. Emptying the disgusting bathroom trash can is glorifying to the Lord if done from a heart of gratitude.

Our time has been marked by continual change since our arrival. We have had a few very painful goodbyes. Our hearts knit together in the time we spend together and we need to release team members who have become closer than family. We have also had a few painful hellos..... Ok, can I just be honest? Sometimes there are staggering differences between an individual's personal profile and the real experience of doing life with them! Just saying... and I'm sure it goes both ways .

Here is a brief overview of current projects.

1. Food distribution (morning) we have distributed 7,500 Hayacas and 8,000 waters between the Red Cross, the hospital, and the Rio Arauca. Initially restricted to only women, children, elderly and incapacitated, we have turned to feeding men as well due to diminishing numbers. Many of the homeless are no longer in the parks and streets. The police and military have been working to reduce their numbers. Many impoverished families are living together in small run-down houses throughout the city just to get away from the police who are arresting those with no place to go. We don't have proof but are certain that many of the desperate ones by the river have crossed over in boats during the night. The border vigilance is not sufficient to stop all boat traffic.

2. At the center we have distributed 1,200 Hayacas, 1,000 ham and cheese bread rolls, and 4,000 waters. The demand at the gate has been so intense that we were becoming very stressed out by it. With increasing restrictions and increasing demands we were forced to close one night and told the crowd to disperse. We are under close scrutiny and must avoid causing situations that violate regulations. It was a hard decision to make but we have remained closed and are able to direct our energy more effectively by going to them instead.

3. We have chosen to buy medicine for certain qualifying medical cases. Medical care for the Venezuelans is partial at best and completely lacking for some of the neediest. There is a great opportunity for a clinic here if we had the personnel to run it.

4. In the afternoon we have begun seeking out the most needy. So far, we have distributed approximately 300 bags of rice and beans. Raw food is far less costly so we can feed many more. Currently our focus is to triage the many families we meet and develop a regular food distribution.

5. We have been visiting the mental hospital bi-weekly, by request of one of the staff, to have services with the residents. This same care giver also asked that we pray with a young woman seeking deliverance from demonic oppression. We met with her twice and saw her experience a lot of freedom. At present we are not permitted to visit there.

6. We have provided shelter for women and children at the center's adjacent apartment. We have sent certain cases that we couldn't handle to a hotel nearby and paid a few nights. We paid a month rent for three women and 10 children who were staying at our shelter and needed a place to spend quarantine. Our shelter was inadequate space for all day use. We also paid a month rent for a young couple with a child who got stranded in Arauca with plans to go to Bogota.


7. We have spent many hours sitting with people to hear their stories and pray for spiritual, physical and emotional healing. Many of them are attracted by the loaves and fishes, but a few are looking for a better way. They see the witchcraft, immorality and dead religion and are seeking freedom from the chains of many enslaved generations. I often wish for an instant download of Spanish so I could be more affective! We could spend all day everyday ministering to only the spiritual needs of the people. There needs to be teaching among the local churches to equip them to help their people!

So, what are we able to do during lockdown? At this time, we are only allowed to go out between 7am and 2pm. Because of this we have crammed all the work into these few hours. In addition to distributing Hayacas and water in the morning, we are taking raw food to needy families at their homes. Each morning around 10:00, eight team members are loading rice and beans on bicycles, in backpacks, and on the carucha (bike cart). They travel 5-10 miles during the 4 hours that they are gone. This has given the team a lot of exciting adventures and much needed exercise as they enter homes to distribute food and triage families. Because of the time constraints, it is necessary to work through the hottest time of day. There is a reason why the locals take it easy from 12:00 - 2:00!

We are currently doing more than before. Many unproductive distractions have been removed from us and I have been intentional

about scheduling worthwhile periods of Spanish study, spiritual renewal along with Siesta time, and strategic planning. In short, the quarantine has forced upon us a much-needed reset.

Merle has spent a lot of time with the legal aspects of the ministry to ensure that we have permission to continue our daily work. Alex has been giving us daily updates about changing regulations. Jolee's interpreting skills have been a constant aid in crossing the language barrier. Marilyn is a steady mature influence whose long-term experience is a real plus. She and Sarah are currently diligently studying Spanish and planning to remain for now. Sarah's practical approach to compassion and willingness to meet the "down-and-out" on their level keeps us all human. Mervin brings so much strength to the team with his quiet confidence and incredible servants' heart. He is currently seeking an answer about remaining here a while longer (beyond the quarantine). My wife is an incredible source of strength to the team as she fills the role of Mom. Her unfailing vision and creativity have a worthy outlet. Our children are still trying to decide who they are on the field. So much has changed and we are endeavoring to create a healthy new reality for them. And the Director.... Let's just say God's got me on the Potter's wheel! It's scary and uncomfortable at times as He shapes me more and more into the leader that I am becoming. But as a lump of clay there's no better place to be! Thank you for the support you all have been to us through your prayer, planning, and attending a myriad of necessary tasks that we don't even realize you are doing. God bless you and your families richly. And please come to see us if you get a chance.

Thank you and God bless you to our sponsors for sharing the love of Christ with needy Venezuelan and Colombian families! 

~ Conrad



The bike squad. Catching a bit of shade on their mission of mercy



▲ Rice and beans. Food for the family ▼ A family's 'house' on the outskirts of Arauca



I have been caring for this sweet lady for about 2 weeks now. Yolanda is 65 years old. We found her by the river suffering from a severe respiratory infection. We brought her home to our shelter and have been caring for her. We were able to help her see doctors and get the things she needed for her infection. Now she is so much better!

Yolanda has had a hard life. She was born in Colombia, but worked for many years in Venezuela laboring on a farm, being a housemaid, cutting firewood for people, and sweeping streets. She came here about 5 months ago.

She has 3 children, but has not been able to locate one son for years. We don't want to put her out in the streets again. We thought maybe she could go live with one of her children in Bogota. When I asked her about it, her eyes filled with tears. She said, "They don't want me."

I told her that is very sad. When they were babies, she cared for them and now when she is old, they should care for her. When I said that she broke down and sobbed loudly crying, "I know! I know!" I held her until she grew quiet. She then said, "You have done so much for me! I don't know how to thank you!" I told her that I have loved caring for her and that I will miss her when she leaves. She started crying again.

I then asked her how we can pray for her. She said, "Pray for my children, for my grandson who is sick, and for me. I don't where I'm gonna go or what I'm gonna do." We are hoping to make contact with her children. Pray that God would move their hearts with love for their mother. Pray that this lonely soul would feel the presence of God in a very real way wherever she goes!



Psalm 82:3,4 Defend the weak and the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the land of the wicked.

These words ring through my heart and soul as I think about developing and launching Guardian Academy. We all have stories we could tell of time and places where we have been rescued from things that were threatening to crush and destroy us. It may be a story of a violent accident, the death of a loved one, or the crushing weight of emotional trauma. Regardless of the details of your story, it is most likely that you can look back to that moment and find a person or group of people who stepped in to Protect, Defend, and Keep you in your moment of need. For us these verses have become our purpose statement. This is why we are doing what we are doing. We want to be the hands and feet of Jesus to Defend, Protect, and Keep the people in the most dangerous, remote, and unreached places. Places where wars rage, natural disasters strike and people seem to whisper... you are crazy to go there. That is where we are called to live with purpose, leadership, and passion.

We have put hundreds of hours into developing a training program designed to develop the whole person body, soul, and spirit and to take practical real-world life experiences and turn them into college credits. But to us the most important thing is that cadets learn to lead with excellence, professionalism, and humility, that they love to learn and grow, and that they live for Christ with a whole heart.

This project is a large undertaking with incredible potential for global kingdom impact. To make this possible we need you to partner with us financially and to help us spread the word. Our budget is \$775,350 for year one. This seems to be a totally unreachable goal but we have seen time and again how God has made a way for His work even when it seemed impossible. From the first day that I heard about this vision I have seen God work in amazing ways to pull a team of talented, kingdom minded people together to move this vision forward. We would be humbled and grateful to have you join us in one or more of the following ways.

- Giving financially
- Spreading the word
- Signing up as a cadet
- Volunteering as cooks, instructors, and prayer warriors for training events

Also, check out the website for this program:
www.guardianinternational.org

I've often wondered how different our life would be today if we would've chosen to go into the city.

Concrete block wall, concrete roof, a dirt floor, a single room. By this point I was too exhausted to care or even notice that this place had no electricity, no plumbing or bathroom and the cold wind whistled in through the two big openings in the wall. I simply curled up in the corner, wrapped my blanket around me, and fell asleep. For the first time in more than two months I felt safe. Yes, there were still a lot of questions but those would wait. For now, I was safe.

I awoke hours later I work hours later, shivering, with my stomach growling and my throat parched. I stumbled to my feet, and saw that the rest of my family was still asleep. I walked over to the doorway. All I could see around me were unfinished block houses. It was raining slightly, and a cold wind was whistling up the mountain. In the distance was a city, behind me was a mountain, steep and littered with rocks. I shivered, turned and went back into the house. Finding my blanket, I tried to go back to sleep. However, the cold and my gnawing stomach wouldn't let me and I found my mind wondering.

When we had arrived in the village the evening before we had first gone to meet the Muktar (tribal chief) and he had told us where we could find a room. By this time there were thousands of refugees in this part of the village which was made up of 250 empty, unfinished houses. Of course, they weren't empty anymore. Most families only had one room and even the big warehouse building had thirteen families living in it. The Muktar told us that food was scarce here, the Assyrian Christians living in the village didn't have much themselves and they really didn't want us here, living in the houses they had built. But it was a place to stay for a while, it was safe, and we were together. Even I knew that we had much more than most of those that had been in Sinjar with us.

Having a place to sleep, however, didn't satisfy my hunger and I finally gave up trying to sleep and decided to go exploring a bit. I stepped outside the house and tried to get my bearings as I looked around. There was a steady stream of people walking down the street and as I looked where they were going I saw a crowd gathering in front of a large, semi-finished building about two blocks away. I decided to go investigate. "Where is everyone going?" I asked, as I joined a group of children about my age.

One of them turned to look at me, "Did you just get here?"

"Last night," I replied. "Where is everyone going?"

"To get food," He said. "The Americans are giving out food."

"Food!" That definitely caught my attention and I hurried to keep up. I had never met an American before but right now I was more interested in possibly getting some food.

"Yes," the boy said, "They came just last week and have been handing out food every other day. They are also working to put plastic on our windows to keep out the wind. Doesn't do much to keep out the cold but it's better than having big, open holes in the walls." He paused, and then continued to talk as we walked. "They, re... well... different. I don't know how to explain it but the people who live here in the village are always hollering at us and telling us to go away. The Americans, there's something about them, I don't really know how to explain it." He paused. "It almost seems as if they care about us."

Americans? Caring about us? I wondered what he meant but didn't say anything. The truth was, no one had ever cared about the Yazidis and I wasn't going to believe it now. For generations, we had been a minority group, living among other, more powerful people groups and even as young as I was, I knew that I would have to take care of myself in life. There was no one else that would. Even god didn't care. The temple was cold and miserable and I always felt uneasy, even scared there. I shrugged and hurried to stay with the rest as we joined the throng of others pressing forward, eager to get something, anything really, that I could eat.

It seemed like it took forever, but finally we were standing in front of the open window. There was a girl standing there, handing out bags of food through the open window while two young men tried to keep order and keep the line moving in a somewhat orderly fashion. When it was my turn she turned, handed me a bag of food, and then did something that I didn't expect. She reached out, touched my shoulder, looked right into my eyes, and smiled the most beautiful smile that I had ever seen. Her face looked serene, peaceful, and I thought she must surely be an angel. She wore a long, flowing dress and had a white scarf on her head. I wanted to ask her why she was giving me food, why she cared, but the line kept moving and I was forced to move with it as she turned to get another bag of food for the person behind me. Not even bothering to look into the bag, I quickly made my way through the crowd and ran quickly back to the cold, little room where my family was. Suddenly, the room didn't seem quite as cold and the sun peeked through the colds and shone in through the windows.

I burst into the room and saw that the rest of the family was awake. "I have food!" I said. "Here, an angel gave it to me!"

This is their story and my goal is to write it as factual as possible with the limited detail I have. Names have been changed for safety reasons and I have taken liberty to add details as I have seen fit in order to create a readable story while maintaining the integrity of the account as told to me. — Mike

PLAIN COMPASSION CRISIS RESPONSE

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HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

- Support us financially.
- Volunteer to help
- Remember Plain Compassion Crisis Response in your will.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

MIDDLE EAST

- We are looking for a young man to lead the project in Syria. Previous experience with PCCR or a similar organization is required.
- We are looking for long term volunteers (six months or more) to teach English in the Community Center. Teaching experience or TESOL certification is needed. We can assist with obtaining TESOL certification.

COLOMBIA

- One month (or longer) volunteers to serve in street ministry and assisting with general duties.
- Girls to help in the kitchen preparing meals, cleaning, doing general housework and assisting with schooling Conrad's five children.
- A young man to serve long-term (6 months +) as a team leader
- Another couple to join Conrad and Darlene as they serve and assist them with caring for the needs of teams and running the day to day operations.
- As always, Spanish speaking volunteers are greatly needed in Colombia.

Currently, all flights to the foreign fields have been closed because of the coronavirus. The Iraqi and Colombian governments have now started easing travel restrictions and we hope to be able to travel again soon. The needs are much greater than they were before, especially in Colombia. Please pray about getting involved and helping us to meet these needs and make disciples of these nations.



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