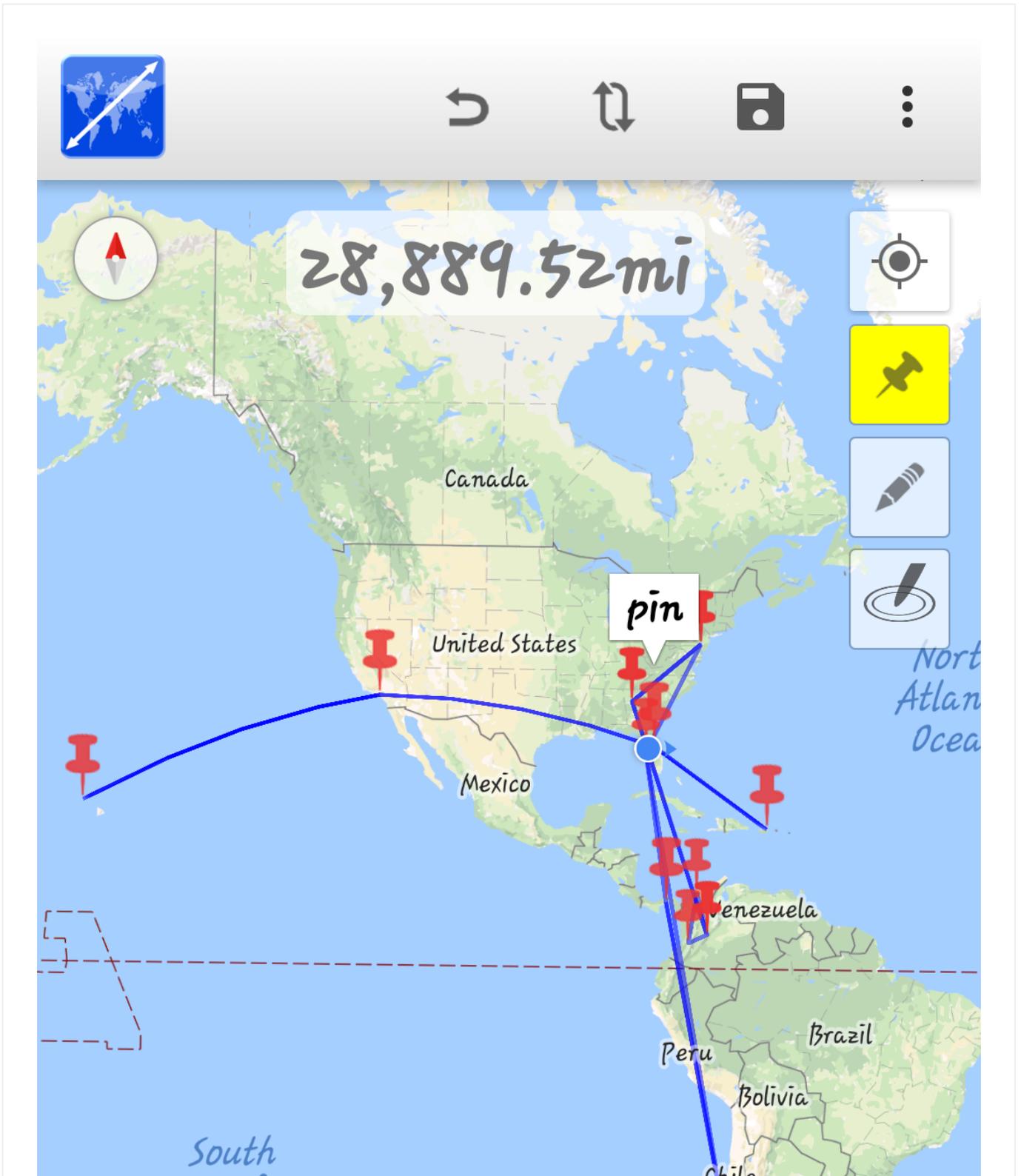
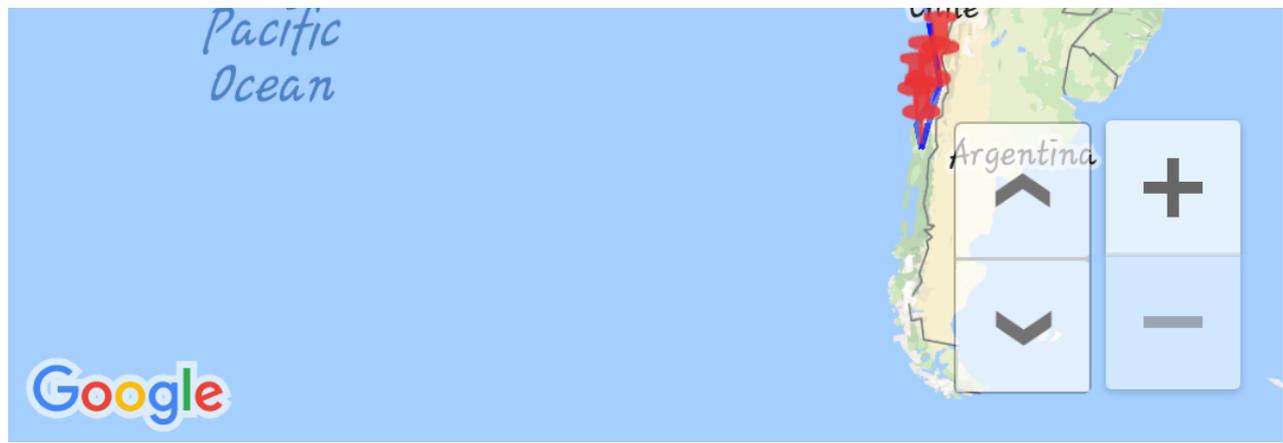


JOURNALS POSTED ON MARCH 22, 2018

Totally exposed... / Al descubierto...





CARLOS BONILLA &
MAYRA GIOVANETTI



SUPPORT PLEDGED



COLOMBIA

March: This month the journal will not follow the norm. It is not the 25 words for the **World Mission Offering** prayer guide. Nor the 100 words for the prayer card description. Neither the 250 words for the **Guide to Global Servants** testimonial. Not even the 500 words for the bulletin insert format. It is a heart to heart that goes beyond what can fit in a bulletin insert; how our recent trips to Colombia, Chile, Puerto Rico, and O’ahu are interconnected with our lives and ministry. To read this in Spanish, please kindly go [here](#).

Why will it not follow the norm? Because a while ago, one of our network siblings wrote asking us to share in our journals “something that reveals your hearts – (for instance, “God spoke to me in my prayer time..., I really have a passion for..., I am feeling called to..., I am struggling in this area of my faith...)” Indeed, guilty as charged! When we write, we actually focus more on what is accomplished than what is a challenge; yet, one of these challenges is actually the space allotted for such writing when limited by the size of the page or what is

asked of us to share in official literature as referenced above. But, we kept this dear brother's request in mind and in our hearts and the time has come to be totally exposed.

But, before getting any further, there are two housekeeping items we want to make sure you are aware of to avoid missing snail mail.

1. ABFMS' offices moved. The new physical and mailing address is:

1003 W. 9th Ave, Suite A, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

2. The **2018 Spring Match** will provide a good opportunity for current donors to increase your commitment and for new donors to start giving to our ministry. A very generous donor has made \$100,000 available for this year's Spring Match, so please take advantage of this opportunity to give to our ongoing support and to any of our global servants' colleagues. It is particularly timely to inch us closer to reaching 100% of our budget before being sent to Colombia. It can reduce in half the time and effort to reach that goal by taking advantage of the 2018 Spring Match. It will run from **April 15, 2018 until midnight June 15, 2018 or until funds are depleted, whichever comes first**. Remember, increased gifts (annual or recurring) will be matched and new gifts will be matched. THANK YOU!!! *It is the first time since 1814 that ABFMS directs a global servants' unit to Colombia.* Together and thanks to your support, we will serve in Colombia. Be sure to write on the memo line of your check (or make a note in your online gift): **2018 Spring Match for Global Servant Name and Last Name of your choice**. Again, THANKS!!!

Can you already see how complicated it is to fit what one wishes to share in a bulletin insert format with limited space? Let us try to continue with our topic of this month: totally exposed... The first three countries of service (Chile, Spain, and Nicaragua) were a great school to exercise the muscle of our faith in Jesus Christ. We have had our great share of joys side by side with an equal share of challenges. One of them has been staying connected even after we have left the country of service. As we are a global servants' family that loves spending time as a family, it has been difficult having to wait for years to again be with those we came to love and care for; those we walked with and learned from; the extended family that will together be rejoicing in heaven with the clouds of witnesses that are added each day to His Kingdom. You can say that we are quite passionate about His Kingdom, family, and discipleship.

When we left Israel, for the second time in 1993, we had no idea it would not be until 1996 that we would be able to return (while pregnant with our first-born son) and not until 2012 with our three children. Yet, in all those years, we stayed connected to our loved ones in His Land until we were finally able to see each other again. Since 2012 we haven't returned as a family, yet our first-born son just finished a semester of studies abroad in his own third trip (first in uterus and twice through his own eyes).

Same happened when we left Chile in 2009. When would our next visit be? Or Spain in 2012. When next? Or Nicaragua in 2016. When next? Mayra went to Spain in 2015 with two representatives of the ABWM of Indiana for the dedication of the Women's Shelter in Lorca they had raised support to build in replacement of the one that had been destroyed by the 2011 earthquakes, but the rest of the family has not been back to Spain.

We all were able to return to **Chile** this last Christmas season 2017. Suffice to say that seeing with our own eyes what we read on Facebook confirms God's faithfulness to His mission and is an encouragement to our faith. Why going back to Chile? Like I just said, since 2009 that we left, we hadn't been able to return. It was a long overdue visit. The timing was right

as it was actually easier to coordinate housing for our family in Chile than it was in the USA for that time of the year. Chile is very long yet we managed to visit most of our beloved ones. We were challenged not to be discovered in surprising our dearest heart daughter and heart son-in-law on the day she would give birth to their first-born son. We struggled in our prayers for them as they had already lost their first two babies and this one was bringing the umbilical cord around his neck! Lord, let it not happen for a third time in a row, please: we prayed. Having had miscarriages ourselves, and knowing of others who had also had several losses before actually having a child to rock in their arms, we could not help it but to be concerned. Happily, this time was the charmer and it all went well. We visited several families in Coronel/Concepción/Penco area. It is so good to feel that though almost nine years had gone by, it felt like it had been the previous weekend that we had seen each other last.

Our heart daughters and our family had several opportunities to enjoy each other. It was a joy to see them so active in the church, leading Bible school for children in a underprivileged community where they started an ongoing Saturday VBS. What they have learned, they are teaching! Isn't that what discipleship is about? Sharing with others in their lives, their walk, their day to day... Passing on to others what was passed on to us... Our hearts jumped with joy to see that in action through them. The church was having their anniversary and our baby grandson was dedicated that day. What an honor for Carlos to share the Word and for Mayra to dedicate to the Lord this gift from Him. Two other families we visited in that area were another testimony of God's faithfulness and provision. Families that have grown and continue serving the Lord. So good to see them again!

Going south to Temuco was a thrill... After four years of hot weather in Nicaragua, the crisp fresh air of Temuco was very comforting. Weather in different countries is another of our constant challenges. We were greeted with friends who continue to put in practice in their churches what they learned when we taught at their Baptist Theological Institute. Those we left as teens are now adults and professionals. The pastoral leadership in the region are well invested in their study of the Word and when sharing of the Bible study materials we have, their immediate request to have access to them are a clear signal of how God has been moving for us to prepare it and for many to express their desire to use them. Hunger and thirst of God's Word will lead to strong, centered disciples of the Lord serving in healthy congregations.

In Chillán and San Carlos we visited the places where we used to when we lived there. Stopped by where we lived, where we ate, the doctor who cared for us at the time, even the hairstylist and our favorite restaurant. It seemed as if time had not passed, only seeing new housing complexes made us aware of the change. We were recognized by the waitress, the stylist, and the doctor, after so many years... We are called to impact others as the Lord has impacted us; not only within the walls of a sanctuary but also in our day to day with those outside of the walls. The testimony of the small church you supported in the construction of its sanctuary, continues to be present in that community in San Carlos. Their leading family cares for the place and for its people and community. Others have moved to other congregations and are serving the Lord in them. Wherever we move, we need to bring a good testimony with us beyond the names we carry or the church we represent. His Name is to be glorified and honored, as they are.

A few days by ourselves in a peaceful place refreshed us for the last portion of our trip in Chile; even witnessing a breathtaking sunset on the Solstice of Winter/Summer. We had briefly stopped by in Santiago upon arrival and had already made a few visits and upon

return for this last portion, we spent quality family time with our dear families in town. Some of our heart sons and their families, as well as heart families with whom we spent Christmas and New Year's. The kids are now teens, the teens are now adults, new kids have been born; the family grows!!! The best way to support development is encouraging education. Seeing how many of these young ones are making their own impact in their communities gives us great satisfaction.

We had been physically away from Chile since March 1, 2009, but this trip proved we had never left and our strong ties with the people we loved and served with carry the effect of discipleship which emphasizes on relationships regardless of time and distance. It requires effort, time, devotion and it provides a continuity to what God had started in them and us and will continue for as long as He allows.

We went to Chile after our trip to **Colombia** (Fall of 2017). It reconfirmed how important our interconnections are in the discipleship we experience as individuals, as a family, and as churches that seek to be faithful and obedient to God. How many years have we had to wait to be in Colombia, Carlos' country of birth? Since he left in 1989 for our wedding in Puerto Rico, he had been back 3 times (total of 22 days in 28 years!), Mayra twice (total of 19 days!), and the children only once (total of 1 night!). We all are definitely ready and looking forward to moving to Colombia and serving the Wayuu people in the Guajira-Northern Region.

In Colombia we visited *Cartagena, Cali, and Bogotá*. Cartagena is very similar in many ways to Puerto Rico. Mayra's mom will not notice too much of a difference should we live in Cartagena. The churches in Cartagena are very warm and we were welcomed and celebrated on our 28th wedding anniversary though it was our first visit. Interestingly enough, that day they had no electricity; hence, no fans or sound system. Yet, that did not prevent them/us from having a wonderful worship experience or listening to a Bible centered sermon. Their ABWM equivalent was announcing upcoming events, and in fact, this **August 1-4, 2018**, the **Baptist Women Ministries of Latin America** will meet in Cartagena on their quinquennial gathering. If at all possible, we'd love to be there for such a vital event!

In Cali we met with several officials of the **UNIBAUTISTA**, a long-standing partner in ministry in the country, exploring together ministry opportunities where ABFMS could be directing a global servant's unit to accompany them. From these meetings surfaced their invitation to support their discipleship efforts with the Wayuu people in the Guajira-Northern Region. Through them we also met officials of the **Baptist Denomination of Colombia** and learned of common goals with ABFMS. There is so much that could be done in the country and where our mission society can be a blessing! Colombia is such a big country, with so many different regions and groups. Pray with us that we can identify with the national ways in which our churches can partner and serve together in the country. We are the first global servant's unit since 1814 directed by ABFMS to serve in Colombia, yet Puerto Rico has had a presence in the country for more than 20 years through Pastors Walleska Febres and her Colombian husband Leonardo Florez from whom we pray we can learn a lot.

Going back to Bogotá provided for some family time with Carlos' brother and sister and their families. Carolina celebrated her 18th birthday with her uncle, aunt, and cousin, and even our area director had the opportunity to meet a portion of the Bonilla family. Good, close friends are hard to find. Carlos and his friend have mustered the art of friendship despite distance and time. What a joy to spend time with him and his wife; even his 90+ years young mother. With Colombia's geography, there are challenges to move by ground to some areas; yet we were able to see a few of its most beautiful places. When praying to go to Colombia, we struggle with how big the country is, the newness of serving with

indigenous groups (will we need to learn another language?), not having visited often or long enough in these almost 30 years! In many ways, it will be a new country for all of us, including Carlos. In this assignment, only Carlos, Mayra, Daniela, and Mayra's mom Hilda will live in the country. Alberto is already enroute to his own life after graduation this coming May and Carolina is enroute to college this coming August. New family dynamics for your BGs, with all that entails... Plus, we struggle to keeping the faith that God will provide what we need to reach the 100% of our budget before having a departure date to Colombia.

Like we've shared before, a major hurdle has been the financial situation in many of our network churches. Even in the USA there are churches that have needed to reduce their giving due to their own financial challenges. We know it is hard for everyone! Yet, finances are never a problem for God when He accomplishes His mission. We see that in our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico, especially after the 2017 hurricane season. Which brings us to the third trip in our journal.

In January, Mayra and her mom Hilda went to **Puerto Rico** (for the first time since the hurricanes) to run the last few errands related to the move (like moving stuff from storage in the island to storage in the USA). It is not the same to see it in the news, on Facebook, or on TV than to see it first hand, with your own eyes! And this was almost four months after the hurricanes!! And we were mostly in the metropolitan area where Hilda used to live and where Mayra's dad Pedro lives!!! These were supposedly the areas with less damage or where damage had been fixed the fastest. Yet, where we stayed there was electricity in the houses but not in the street light posts; some of them were on the floor and sidewalks pending to be removed or still collapsed as a hazard to the houses nearby. Most traffic lights were not working, and SOME HAD EVEN DISAPPEARED. One had to be very careful when reaching an intersection to avoid hitting someone or being hit. Even the airport is not at its full capacity. Roads were not in the best of shapes. We were there barely a week, enough to run our errands. But they have had to live with this day in and day out. To see places where the lack of trees uncovered what was behind them; many places were totally exposed, even the old town's cemetery where my maternal grandparents were laid to rest... Hard to drive around and see that feeling of nakedness around you. So many places waiting to be rebuilt, restored, and renewed. Short-term mission teams are encouraged to join these efforts. We will be supporting and joining some of these, one of them already preparing to go end of May! If you feel led to join us or organize one team in your church or region, please let us know. Until we move to Colombia, we continue serving and loving... We pray that by the time we move to Colombia, all of the island of Puerto Rico will have electricity; not like now (six months since the hurricanes) that there are still more than 300,000 American citizens in Puerto Rico without power, as stated by the director of the electric company. Outrageous! Yet, despite it all, our Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico continue fulfilling their missionary commitment sending their offerings, alas in different amounts than what they were able and used to before the hurricanes.

From the east of the Americas in January, we went to the west of the Americas in February. Remember the "reverse missions" experiences we've already shared in California with Christ-First and Montana with FBC Billings? There were other one-day reverse mission experiences during our visits in the USA last Summer/Fall and one awaited for us in **O'ahu** this February with FBC Honolulu. God works in mysterious ways and always surprises us when we are open to His leading us and are willing to invest ourselves in His Kingdom work. Such an invitation came to us last May from our dear Sharon Dumas. She asked us if we had been to Hawai'i and why not, we told her we hadn't because we had not been invited. To which she asked if we'd go if there was an invitation, to which we replied "of course"! So we

arranged to go during Alberto's last college Spring break, so all 6 of us could go. What for? To serve with FBC Honolulu in their ministry to homeless around their community. They serve a meal on Wednesday nights and Sharon was able to coordinate opportunities in three other places: IHS (Monday and Thursday), Alea Bridge (Tuesday), and River of Life (Wednesday). Did you know that Hawai'i is the state with more per capita homelessness in the nation? We didn't and by the amount of people who came to these meal services, there are more than ministries and agencies can keep up with serving them! It seems like there are states in Mainland that rather than taking care of their homeless, prefer to put them on a one-way ticket to Hawai'i... How sad to discard those less fortunate! It was humbling to see their level of education (saying please and thank you) and willing to wait in line. Most of them avoided looking face to face, but some did make eye contact. Hard to strike a conversation with any of them as it was one after the other; yet we tried to serve them with a loving smile as Jesus' would have himself. Two places would serve them a hot meal while the other provided them food bags to go as well as clothes. One of them also had a clothes closet which we helped reorganize on our last visit. How much is discarded that can still be used by others! Lots of household goods and clothes for newcomers or those who were having a tough time to find jobs and a decent earning. How much we take for granted of the gifts we have been bestowed upon. Now that we dealt with our downsizing Hilda's house and the BGs belongings for our houseless combined family, we know how it is to accumulate only to have to deal with it later. What for, if we will not take any of it to heaven anyways??? Material stuff is not worth it. Investing in the Kingdom is what will last forever!

So how are these four trips connected? If you look at the pic, it makes a cross (north, south, east, and west). We are bound by His Cross and His message. We need to be interconnected and not live isolated from each other, like islands that feel so lonely and disconnected from the rest. We saw realities that left our hearts and souls totally exposed. The common request in Chile and Colombia for the Bible study materials we have prepared and continue to enhance. The desperate need in Puerto Rico and Hawai'i for support of those less privileged. The vastness of ministry opportunities in all places while still lacking the human power to address them. The potential feeling of hopelessness when things seem beyond our control. Indeed, for many they are out of our control, yet never out of God's control. He has continually proven Himself faithful and has provided us a way to be totally exposed to reveal our hearts in His presence without fear or anxiety. He has spoken to us in our prayer time to continue being faithful and obedient to Him, even when we don't always understand His timing and ways. Indeed, we have a passion for His Kingdom, family, and discipleship for which we feel called to move to Colombia, as we did to Chile, Spain, and Nicaragua. Each time expanding the family ties, and each time being totally exposed to learning experiences and challenges that He helped us overcome. We continue to struggle with the changes in our family's dynamics and know that just as He has been faithful to provide us opportunities to meet last year (in Colombia and Florida), He will continue to care for us all, regardless of where we will be. On the bright side, going back to Chile reinforced philosophy on discipleship seeing the fruits of what God allowed us to be a part of at the beginning of our ministry that is bearing fruit that will carry into our next assignment.

If you are reading this far, we know you are one of our beloved! Marketing rules may say less is more, but every so often, those rules don't apply and a good heart to heart is in order, like our friend requested! Yes, we know you have your own struggles, challenges, dreams, and desires. We pray for you too. You are precious to our family and we covet your ongoing prayers, encouragement, and financial support. We are grateful for being with us and allowing us to be with you in the happy times as well as the sad ones. We cherish our two-way relationship! Do not envision writing extensive journals hereafter but glad that online

there is no limit to sharing our hearts when appropriate. Feel free to contact us should you want to know more about us beyond what is written in a journal or a bulletin insert. We love hearing from you! Looking forward to hearing how God is nudging you to financially accompany us as we prepare for our way to Colombia. We truly appreciate it. While our hearts are totally exposed, our minds are filled with images of the great cloud of witnesses we are blessed to call our family... We love you!

Stretching further and "*totally exposed*",
your BGsEnRoute

Find us on www.facebook.com/BGsEnRoute and "Like" our page for updates and pictures of our ministry.